Southend High School for Boys

Attendance Policy

October 2023

1. Policy aims

Research shows that schoolwork missed through absence is unlikely to be caught up. Pupils who miss between 10 to 20% of a school year (between 19 to 38 days) stand only a 35% chance of gaining 5 or more good GCSEs whereas the figure is 73% for those pupils whose attendance is above this rate. Poor attendance may also lead to behavioural issues at school and general unhappiness; by-products of the intermittent engagement of the pupil with academic and pastoral support, friends and broader opportunities offered by the school environment.

Consequently, high attendance levels are an essential element of success.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- acting early to address patterns of absence.

Poor attendance leads to unfulfilled potential. Every day of learning counts. National data illustrates a direct correlation between academic success and high levels of attendance. It is clear: students who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve their full potential.

Impact of absence			
Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent	Which is approximately this many weeks absent	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation, setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register
By law, the school is required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

(See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.)

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 2.00pm. Pupils arriving after these times will be marked as late.

3.2 Unplanned absence
Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence at the earliest opportunity by telephone or email (attendance@shsb.org.uk).

A parent should then contact the school on the third day of absence and every other day thereafter, *unless* a period of absence has already been predetermined, most obviously by a doctor's certificate.

Absence due to illness will be authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. In such cases, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription or appointment card. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school remains dissatisfied about the authenticity of the illness, it may seek the advice and assistance of external agencies, most obviously an LEA attendance officer. Remaining doubt about the legitimacy of the absence may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

We encourage parents to make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time possible.

We ask to be notified in advance for all medical and dental appointments made during school hours. This may be done by telephone or email (attendance@shsb.org.uk). If a phone call or email is not possible, a letter signed by a parent should be handed in at the school office when the student signs out for the appointment.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment will be counted as an authorised absence if notified in the manner outlined above.

The school will support any pupil with extended medical treatment which disrupts their ongoing education. Such support may take the form of providing any relevant institution, most obviously a hospital, with any necessary educational materials. Please refer to our policies: 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions' and 'Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School'

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

The morning register closes at 9:10am; the afternoon register closes at 2:10pm. A pupil who arrives after the register has been taken, but before the register has closed, will be marked as late using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Teachers, Form Tutors and Year Leaders oversee processes that encourage good punctuality. Such systems are designed to ensure that poor punctuality does not become habitual on the part of the pupil. Contact will be made with parents when appropriate.

3.5 Following up absence

Where any child who is expected to attend school does not attend or stops attending, the school will follow up on their absence with their parent to ascertain the reason. The Attendance Officer will telephone the parent on the first day of any unexplained absence. This is to help the school identify whether the absence is approved or not, and to apply the correct attendance code. The school will also ensure that safeguarding action is taken wherever necessary.

3.6 Reporting to parents
Information about pupil attendance is available through Go4Schools. This is live data and parents can access this information on the app or via the website.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence
Any leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion. This responsibility is delegated to Directors of Key Stage and Year Leaders, who will assess all requests for term-time absence in the first instance. Please note that leave of absence during term-time will not be granted other than in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances may be defined as a special family event, such as a graduation, or a medical emergency. In addition, authorisation may be given if the pupil is engaged in an activity provided by an external organisation, which is deemed to have educational merit, such as a scout camp, or when the activity is clearly linked to a planned future career, such as medical work experience.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context relating to the request.

4.2 Authorised Absence
Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3;
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart;
- University Open Days (Sixth Form pupils will be allowed to attend three open day visits during any one academic year);
- Family emergencies, such as a funeral for a close family member.

4.3 Unauthorised Absence
Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Family holiday;
- Cultural/Sporting event, including events such as music festivals and Wimbledon.

Instances of unauthorised absence will be investigated by the school. Further action will include the involvement of external agencies.

4.4 Legal sanctions
Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the Local Authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- the number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
- patterns of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission;
- an excluded pupil being found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority may choose to prosecute the parent.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance and punctuality

There are a number of strategies promoted by the school to encourage good attendance:

- The school's Attendance Officer scrutinizes attendance data daily. They will notify pastoral staff about unauthorised absences and patterns of poor attendance or punctuality.
- The school has effective links with the attendance services at the Local Authority, including a designated attendance practitioner. Meetings are held with the Local Authority Attendance Officer as required.
- When pupils arrive late to lessons, staff are requested to mark on the register the number of minutes of the lesson that have been missed. Patterns are then analysed by pastoral staff.
- A late card is issued for pupils with poor punctuality, and pupils are asked to make up the time missed at the end of the school day.
- The importance of good attendance is highlighted in presentations at parental events throughout the year.
- The school promotes a safe learning environment with clear lines of support for pupils who may experience difficulties.
- The school works hard to ensure the early identification of pupils at risk of disrupted attendance and will intervene promptly.

6. Attendance monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to contact the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If the school has not been notified by 9:30am on the first day of absence, the parent will be contacted. For any pupil identified as being 'at risk', the call will be made at 9:00am.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, the school will issue a warning letter to the parents concerned. If attendance falls below 85%, parents will be asked to attend a meeting at the school. Should attendance fall below 80%, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority's Attendance Officer. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.
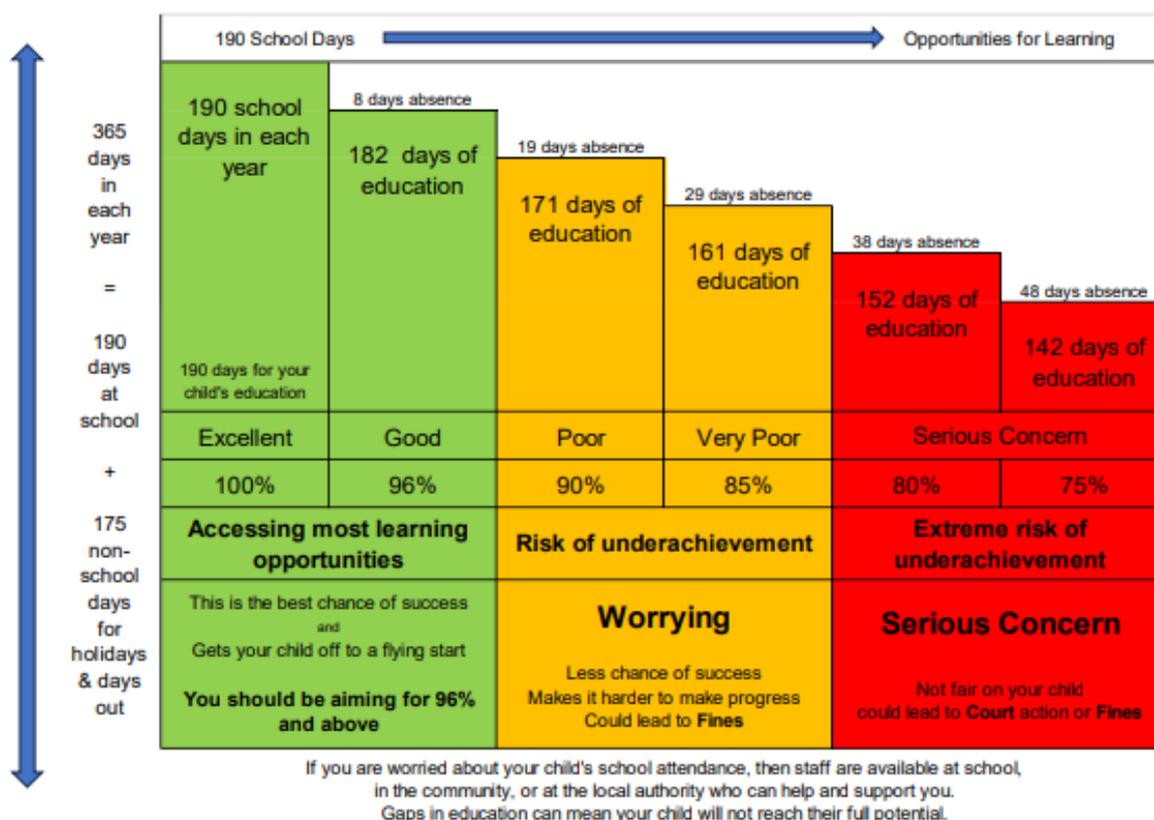
Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside national statistics. The school compares its attendance data to the national average and shares this with Governors.

Any irregular absence during the course of the day will be pursued immediately. In such an eventuality, the school's Attendance Officer will inform the relevant pastoral leader via the pastoral support colleague. If no relevant members of the pastoral team are available, any available member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be informed.

Attendance data is recorded via an electronic system (Go4Schools). Pastoral leaders will use this data to:

- track general patterns of attendance;
- track patterns of absence; and
- identify internal or external factors which might have an impact upon attendance.

The diagram below highlights the levels of concern:

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Governing Body
The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher
The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices where necessary.

7.3 The Attendance Officer
The attendance officer:

- monitors attendance data across the school and at individual pupil level;
- reports concerns about attendance to the relevant pastoral leader; and
- works with the relevant pastoral leader/external services to tackle persistent absence.

7.4 Form Tutors and teachers
Form Tutors and teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Attendance Officer in a timely fashion.

8. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the Child Protection Policy, Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions Policy and Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School Policy.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day