

Attendance Policy

Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust



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1. Aims and principles

We are committed to meeting our 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
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Leadership and management of attendance: we aim to -

1. Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils and families.
2. Make sure staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
3. Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that pupils understand its importance.
4. Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower staff to take responsibility for attendance.
5. Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.

6. Have a designated attendance champion in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
7. Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.
8. SHSG governors should have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate.

Relationships and communication: we aim to -

1. Build respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
2. Communicate openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
3. Liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
4. Model respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:
 - treat pupils with dignity, build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
 - take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
 - understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
 - communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
5. Parents and carers should:
 - treat staff with respect
 - actively support the work of the school
 - call on staff for help when they need it
 - communicate as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

Systems and data: we aim to -

1. Use clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Make sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
2. Make sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.

3. Every member of staff should know and understand their responsibilities for attendance.
4. Robust school systems provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:
 - children who have a social worker including looked-after children
 - young carers
 - children who are eligible for free school meals
 - children who speak English as a second language
 - children who have special educational needs and disabilities
5. Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
6. Provide regular reports to staff and governors across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.
7. School attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies should clearly outline:
 - the key principles
 - rules pupils need to follow
 - routines
 - consequence systems
8. The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:
 - understood by pupils, parents and carers
 - implemented consistently
 - reviewed regularly

Intervention: we aim to -

1. Deliver intervention in a targeted way, in response to data or intelligence.
2. Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).
3. Use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.
4. Create action plans in partnership with families and other agencies that may be supporting families, for example, children's social care and early help services. Commission or deliver interventions to improve attendance.

5. Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy.
6. Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention.
7. Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met.

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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [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. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing board 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.

The Student and Curriculum Committee monitor attendance and attendance is reported via the Headteacher Report at all Full Governing Body meetings.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The Assistant Headteacher responsible for Behaviour and Attitudes

The AHT:

- Monitors attendance data across the school, identifies trends, and supports year teams at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with Senior links, Heads of Year and Pastoral Support Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 The Senior Link and HOY of Year and Pastoral Support Officer

- Monitors attendance across their year group and at an individual pupil level
- Pastoral Support Officers make the first day calling to parents/carers

➤ Reports concerns about attendance to the Assistant Headteacher above

3.5 Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and during the afternoon session. In addition, every lesson has a recorded register on SIMS. 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.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

*** Pupils must arrive in school by 08:30 am on each school day. Any student not on site by 8.30am is late.**

A register is taken at the start of every lesson. The register for the first session will be taken at 08:35. Pupils who arrive after 08:35 receive a late mark 'L' in the register. The register closes at 09:55 am. For afternoon registration, students must arrive at period 4 by 13:25. If they arrive between 13:25 and 13:30 they receive a late mark 'L' in the register by the subject teacher. If the student arrives after 13:30 the subject teacher enters a 'U' code in the register and the minutes that the student is late.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09:00 am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents must notify the student's Pastoral Support Officer via email or in writing 3 school days in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Holidays during term time will not be authorised. The Headteacher may grant leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Clubs, Trips and Fixtures

An accurate pre-populated paper register must be taken at the start of each after school club/practice/fixture. This register must be passed to reception for after school activities. At the start of a trip/educational visit a paper register must be passed to the Pastoral Support Officers.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Pastoral Support Officers are at the school gate every morning and monitor lates. Any student who is late is given a behaviour point and sanctions put in place for persistent lateness.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by phone call.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

If a child is absent from school the following procedures will be followed:

- on the first day of absence parents/carers must contact the school by 09:00 am
- parents/carers must contact the school on every further day of absence, again by 09:00 am, unless specific evidence has been provided (e.g., medical certificate)
- parents/carers must ensure that their child returns to school as soon as possible
- the school will contact parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not had any communication.

- the school will contact parents/carers if a pupil's attendance drops below 90%
- if attendance continues to deteriorate following this communication, the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority.
- if the school is informed that a pupil is moving out of the borough and the parent/carer has provided the school with the destination details the school will wait 10 working days before making a CME referral to give time for the pupil to start the destination school and the CTF to be requested.
- if the whereabouts of a pupil is not known then the school will complete their own checks within an initial 10 working day period. These checks included the below but are not exhaustive:
 - conducting home visits
 - contacting the parent via letter/ phone/email
 - contact the emergency contacts that school hold for the pupil to try to ascertain the family whereabouts
 - contact local schools if they know a sibling attends.
- following the school making reasonable enquires a CME referral form will be made.
- **failure by parents/carers to contact the school or respond to staff calls and other forms of communication regarding absence may trigger a home visit from school staff, a local authority representative, the police or social care. As a school we have a duty of care to our pupils which includes knowing they are safe if they do not arrive at school. We will never assume that a child is at home unwell, until we have been provided with a reason for the absence, or absence has been requested in advance.**

Sixth Form Registration

Registers are taken:

- at morning registration by the Form Tutor.
- at the start of each and every lesson (within the first 15 minutes).
- during their P4 lesson, if they have one
- using the student's thumb print:
- between 13.20 and 13.45 if students do not have a lesson P4.
- students who are free period 3 can leave the school site from 12.15, signing out using the touchscreen in reception.
- when students return to the school site if they have left for lunch

4.6 Reporting to parents

Reports to parents on their child's attendance record are included in the annual full report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

Exceptional circumstances are defined at the headteacher's discretion.

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- 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.

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Further examples include:

- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the headteacher may grant term-time absence
- Study leave
- Flexi-schooling arrangements for individuals

Leaving school during the day: A student may leave school during the day for the following reasons:

- a written request has been given to the Pastoral Support Officer for the student to attend a medical or dental appointment 3 school days in advance of the appointment. Students in Years 7-11 must be collected from reception by a parent/carer. Years 12-13 may leave unaccompanied.
- a written request has been given to the Pastoral Support Officer for the student to attend a music examination or other approved appointment. Students in Years 7-11 must be collected from reception by a parent/carer. Years 12-13 may leave unaccompanied.
- a student is too unwell/injured to continue with the school day and a parent/carer collects them. This includes for both physical health and mental health issues. Parents must collect the students within a reasonable timescale. In certain circumstances the school reserves the right to insist that the student remains in school, after school hours, until the parent/carer collects.
 - Students must not contact parents directly if they feel unwell during school hours. They must report to Reception where First Aid staff on duty will contact parents. First Aid staff at reception will decide whether the student should try to return to lessons or go home.
 - The Director of Sixth Form can authorise Sixth Form students to go home unaccompanied. In this instance, the parent/carer will be informed that the sixth form student is making their way home by telephone and a follow up e-mail.
 - The student will not be allowed to leave until the parent/carer has confirmed that this is acceptable.

In all circumstances, students must inform a member of staff that they are leaving the school and must sign out at reception using their thumb print.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Every fortnight the Pastoral Support Officers produce a list of students with attendance below 93%. This list is shared with the Heads of Year, the SLT link and the Assistant Headteacher responsible for Attendance.

Students with attendance below 90% will receive a Level 1 letter. Students are set the target to achieve an attendance level of 97% or higher during a 6-week monitoring period. All absences within this period must be supported with medical evidence. If targets are not met/attendance shows no improvement this will be escalated to the Local Authority (Level 2)

The Level 2 letter will be followed by a school meeting with the Pastoral Support Officer, parents and the Local Authority attendance officer. Parents may be offered Early Help support to help with wider issues that may be presenting as a barrier to their child attending school.

An action plan will be put into place which will include:

- discussion of the barriers to attendance
- strategies to improve attendance

- the student will be set the target to achieve an attendance level of 97% or higher during a 4-week monitoring period. All absences within this period must be supported with medical evidence.
- the LA taking responsibility for improving the student's attendance.

If attendance still does not show improvement or targets are not met within the review period this will lead to:

- a level 3 attendance meeting with the Pastoral Support Officer, the parents, the Head of Year and the Attendance Officer.

A revised action plan will be put into place and is likely to include:

- new targets
- weekly home visits
- a target set for 6 weeks without any unauthorised absence

If the revised action plan fails, then a pupil-planning meeting will be convened by the Local Authority. This is a pre-legal meeting and will result in a warning of court proceedings. If the family of the student fails to engage with this support, then a final warning and ultimately a financial penalty could result.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is rewarded through the school's achievement points system.

Helping to create good attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of staff. To help focus on this we will:

- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance as part of their full report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 90%.
- Reward good attendance with certificates.
- Provide support to pupils and their families to identify and reduce barriers to good attendance.
- Promote an ethos of attending and learning

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance team at our school monitors pupil absence on a fortnightly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. 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 will be 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 the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

Attendance data is tracked and used for example, to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum once a year by the Student and Curriculum Committee. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour 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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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