

Attendance Policy

Approval Date	Policy Reviewer	Title	Chair of Governors
July 2023	Miss H Ballard	Assistant Headteacher	Faye McGill

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SBPS Attendance Policy

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1. DfE Attendance guidance (2022)

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.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

2. Statement of Intent

South Borough Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality. The Governors, Head Teacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at South Borough Primary School. Strategic oversight is led by Holly Ballard who oversees the Attendance Team. This team can be contacted by emailing sbps_office@swale.at or by telephoning 01622 752161.

3. Timeline of school action for non-attendance

% attendance	School Action	Including
95-100%	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assemblies• Displays• Regular monitoring of attendance levels• Communication of your child's attendance level
90-95%	Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As above and:• Letters informing parents of poor attendance (if attendance does not improve, parents are then invited to a meeting with a member of the Attendance Team).• Parents may be referred to KCC's attendance service or issued a Penalty Charge Notice where absences are not authorised.• Monitoring and support from Attendance Team• Parental meetings• Support from KCC School Liaison Officer
Less than 90%	Targeted Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As above and:• Home visits• Support and monitoring from KCC School Liaison Officer and the Inclusion and Attendance Service

4. Punctuality

Our school gates are open from 8.40am until 8.50am. This allows sufficient time for all pupils to get to their classroom. Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50am as learning begins at this time. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness and number of minutes late is recorded. If your child arrives between 8.51am and 9.15am they will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). The register will close at 9.15am, pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

The school day finishes at 3.15pm for all pupils. Punctuality at the end of the school day is appreciated. Any children not collected by 3.30pm will go to After School Club for which a fee is payable.

At South Borough, we start our day with a high quality Reading lesson. The following table clearly illustrates how being late can add up to a loss of learning to read.

Minutes your child arrives late every day	Number of school days lost in a year
5 minutes late every day	3 days of school lost a year
10 Minutes late every day	6.5 days of school lost a year
15 Minutes late every day	10 days of school lost a year
20 minutes late every day	13 days of school lost a year
30 minutes late every day	19 days of school lost a year

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents at Parent Consultation evenings and may be referred to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or KCC School Liaison Officer (SLO). Letters will be sent to parents if 5 or more episodes of lateness are recorded.

Persistent lateness after the register closes can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice. Children who are persistently late (Coded 'U') for 10 or more sessions after the register has been closed during any possible 100 school sessions may be issued a Penalty Notice in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

5. Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent/carer's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

Advance notification of appointments should be submitted to the school along with a copy of appointment card/letter or "with compliments" slip that states your appointment time by email to sbps_office@swale.at. However, we encourage parents 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. If no explanation along with supporting evidence is received, absences will not be authorised.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in 'exceptional circumstances', but this must be requested in advance by the parent/main carer and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Requests should include reasons why the leave cannot be taken out of term time. Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances is limited to 5 school days (10 sessions) per academic year. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head teacher's decision is final.

Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively. The following reasons are some examples of absence that will not be authorised (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of sibling if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing. When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the referral form with any other relevant information.

From September 2013 the Department for Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Section 444 of

the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (the school has given permission)
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- Due to religious observance
- Due to failure by the Local Authority to provide transport In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be approved, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time. An "exceptional circumstance" would have to be defined as an unavoidable cause e.g., a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school. Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice. Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Unauthorised Leave

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- Absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- The KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded. If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice will be issued by Kent County Council (one per parent per child).

6. Persistent/Severe absence

The definition of a persistently absent (PA) pupil as set out by the DfE is a pupil with 10% or more absence (90% or less attendance). The table below, derived from the census guidance, gives an indication of the minimum number of sessions a pupil would miss by each half term to be classed as PA.

Term	10% absence
Term 1	7 or more missed sessions
Term 2	14 or more missed sessions
Term 3	20 or more missed sessions
Term 4	25 or more missed sessions
Term 5	31 or more missed sessions
Term 6	38 or more missed sessions

The definition of a severely absent (SA) pupil as set out by the DfE is a pupil with 50% or more absence (50% or less attendance). If your child's attendance is below 50% the KCC School Liaison Officer will become involved. As a school, we collect attendance data on our management information system, Bromcom. As per legal requirements, this data is shared with the Local Authority and nationally. Internally, we check this data on a weekly basis to look for patterns of absence across the school and at an individual level with a particular focus on those pupils in danger of being classed as PA. The Attendance Team and Headteacher monitor these pupils and try to work with families to improve attendance. Attendance of pupils that have a history of poor attendance, who are in receipt of free school meals or are vulnerable are a focus of this monitoring. From this, the school keeps a record of identified children. The identified children are the focus of action and intervention and are discussed at meetings with our School Liaison Officer. These identified children become a daily or weekly focus to ensure improvement. The school is committed to working with parents to help solve attendance issues and ensure regular attendance. As parents/carers have accepted a place at our school, it is an expectation that parents/carers will be committed to ensure attendance is as high as possible and pupils are always punctual.

Penalty Charge Notices

- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, Penalty Notice(s) may be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue, Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings
- For more information on Kent's attendance policies, procedures and support they offer please visit, <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-attendance>

7. Children Missing from Education (CME)

In order to prevent children from becoming Missing in Education, the school is legally required to notify the Local Authority of all children removed from our registers outside normal transfer times whatever the reason. Parents are requested to provide the school with all the necessary information about future addresses or new schools in the event of planned changes of address etc. Any information the school holds will be passed on to the relevant school or local authority as required. The school will notify the Local Authority's School Liaison Officer that a child is to be considered CME if:

- A child leaves the school to attend another school and notification of the new school place is not received after ten school days.
- An absence is agreed and the pupil does not return after the agreed time, any additional absence will be classed as unauthorised and if they have not returned within 10 school days of the expected return date, the Education Service will be notified.
- Any unauthorised absence of ten school days or more.

8. Celebrating attendance

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents in order to ensure the highest levels of attendance possible are achieved. Our school attendance target is 97% or above. We celebrate attendance every week in our Power Of Purple assemblies where every class who has attendance of more than 95% gets to roll the dice on our game of Schoolopoly where children can win rewards such as

extra play time, juice and biscuits or dodgeball. We also hold a termly attendance tournament with prizes including a pizza party for the winning class at the end of term.

9. The Role of the School Staff

The Local 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. It is recognised that school attendance and safeguarding are inextricably linked. Therefore, all staff members have a statutory duty to ensure their registers are completed on time. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006). This enables office staff to contact parents of absent children (first day calling) and to follow up on unexplained absence. Each day consists of two sessions, meaning two registration marks. Please see appendix 1 for details about the registration coding used at South Borough Primary School.

The Attendance Team meet weekly to discuss the needs of specific pupils and groups and to create solutions to support with attendance. They also regularly seek out pupil voice on how to further improve attendance at South Borough.

10. The Role of the Local Authority

The local authority (Kent County Council), statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome barriers and ensure all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

As a minimum, however, all local authorities are expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
 - Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
 - Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
 - Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
 - Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
 - Monitor and improve the attendance of looked after children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

11. The Role of Parents

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging antisocial behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent with the reason for absence. Parents should notify the school by phoning the school office before 9.00am on 01622 752161 or an email can be sent to sbps_office@swale.at. This is a safeguarding issue, the school needs to know that your child is safe. If a child is absent for more than 1 day, then you should report the absence every day.

Parents of children whose attendance is a concern such as those with less than 90% attendance and therefore categorised as Persistently Absent (see section 6) will be invited in for meetings to discuss their child's attendance and, if necessary, agree to an Attendance Parent Contract to support in raising their child's attendance. Please see Appendix 2 for the template used to write Attendance Parent Contracts.

12. Legal Intervention

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

Schools, and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that every child has a right to education. The purpose of education is to enable the child to develop to his or her fullest possible potential and to learn respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Appendix 1. Coding Used for Registration

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present AM	Present
\	Present PM	Present
B	Offsite educational activity	Approved education activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another code or description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (present at another school or PRU)	Approved education activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday not agreed (or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved education activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet given for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by another code or description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved education activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after the registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved education activity
W	Work experience	Approved education activity
X	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age)	Not counted in possible attendances.
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances.
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances.
#	School closed to all pupils (planned)	Not counted in possible attendances.

Appendix 2. Parent Attendance Contract Template

Parent Attendance Contract

Child's name:

D.O.B:

Class:

Attendance at start of contract:

Barriers to attendance:

Suggestions to improve attendance:

I (parent) _____ agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified in the contract (typically between 3 and 12 months). Signed _____

We (school) _____ agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified in the contract (typically between 3 and 12 months). Signed _____