Attendance policy
Southborough Primary School

Approved by:	Nicola Tootell	**Date:** 11/22
Last reviewed on:	11/22	
Next review due by:	9/25	

Contents

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:
> Promoting good attendance
> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
> Acting early to address patterns of absence
> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance 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 board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- The Achievement Committee receives regular Attendance Reports

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
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
-

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Patrick Foley and can be contacted via 02084672343, Patrick.foley@southborough.bromley.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Simon Hooper and can be contacted via admin@southborough.bromley.sch.uk

3.5 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

3.6 School staff

School office staff will:

> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
> Transfer calls from parents to a suitable member of the Vulnerable Children Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:
- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:50am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:
- Attend school every day on time

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 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.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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 8:55 am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9:20am.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until1:30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (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.

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.

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

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police or social care.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels **via half termly written reports**.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a circumstance unusual and only likely to happen very infrequently, that is unusual, special, odd, strange. They are circumstances that are likely to be significant and have extraordinary importance to the live off the child. They are not in any way normal or commonplace or ordinary.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.
Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

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

5.2 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

We have a robust and clear Attendance Action Plan, as part of our overall School Development Plan that sets out our actions to promote attendance.

- We instil a staff mindset of high expectations around attendance

  - Our Curriculum promotes attendance both implicitly, by being a curriculum that chidlren want to access, and explicitly, by promoting the importance of education, and attending school
  - Our Golden Rules and school ethos and values promote attendance and school and these are explicitly and implicitly promoted throughout the school day.
  - Staff model a 100% expectation for pupils to attend and learn in every lesson.
  - We establish a senior leadership team presence around school.
  - The Head, Deputy Head and Family Worker welcome children onto the school site in the morning
  - We make sure this first interaction is a positive one, we meet all chidlren with a smile.
  - We have a problem solving attitude to low attendance, working as a team to find solutions.
  - The Vulnerable Children team includes key members of the SLT, and other key people, who work to improve attendance for key children.
  - We make good attendance everyone's responsibility

- We work with parents

  - We use meetings, newsletters and your school website to get all parents on board with your school's expectation for high attendance
  - We offer parenting classes that include sessions on morning routines.
  - We hold school uniform sales and have a stock from school donations, to help parents who can't afford to purchase new items.

- We involve our local community

- We invite adult role models from your community to:
  - Share the importance of good attendance
  - Discuss what happens if someone is late in the workplace or misses work
  - Demonstrate commitment and resilience to pupils
- We give pupils a purpose to be in school each day.

  - We make sure we make the link between good attendance and good outcomes clear to the chidlren, and that good attendance leads to them having more chances in live.
  - Have staff provide low-attenders with a task or responsibility each day, such as tidying the book corner or looking after younger pupils on the playground.
  - We have two rooms that provide a respite for chidlren who find coming to school difficult, to spend the initial time in school before going into class.
  - We also provide nurture time for chidlren who find coming into school difficult, where we share breakfast and conversation before the start of the day.
  - We encourage staff to remind low-attenders about anything exciting happening the following day, such as, "it will be lovely to watch you play football tomorrow.
  - We have regular class learning forums in class where chidlren talk about their learning and emphasize the importance of being in school.

- We offer pupils the tools to come to school

- Provide secure conditions for learning

  - We offer a safe school environment is incredibly important for many reasons, including attendance. It will help to make sure your pupils want to attend every day.
  - We are relentless with managing bullying or any other issues between pupils, including on social media.
  - Offer safe spaces around school and make sure pupils know who they can talk to if they're experiencing any issues from challenges with their peers, to their mental health.
  - We use our exciting curriculum to entice pupils

  - We make sure that the children know that their learning is worthwhile. We highlight what's coming up, so they don't want to miss out on any learning.

  - We check that your curriculum in all subjects is interesting and engaging for all pupils.

  - We are diversifying our curriculum to help all of our pupils feel represented.

  - We are working on developing our curriculum so that we are implicitly and explicitly teaching about attendance into our curriculum.

- In lessons, our teachers:
  - Use pre-learning and anticipation of the next lesson's content to interest children – for example, "tomorrow we are …"
  - Link learning to past and future lessons, split content, and use pole-bridging to link lessons – such as "you will remember in our last lesson we …"

- Anticipate family patterns
    - Including
    - Holidays during term time
    - Birthdays off
    - Younger siblings copying the behaviour of older family members
    - We manage the sometimes-difficult message that days off school for family time are not more important than school education time.
    - We make sure that our school INSET days are contiguous with the school holidays to allow parents access to cheaper holidays.
- We have an attendance lead who's passionate about high expectations

- We have a vulnerable children team who
    - Work on pupils' self-esteem and behaviour for learning, and make sure their conditions for learning suit them as a learner
    - Understand attendance patterns linked to cultural holidays and safeguarding issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM)
    - Work hard to develop relationships with hard-to-reach families
    - Offer surgeries for parents to discuss the reasons behind non-attendance. If parents have school-gate anxiety, for example, they could look to stagger drop offs for parents experiencing any friction
- We have clear stages of action in our policy

- We make it clear that any fines for non-attendance are not a disincentive due to the cost of travel in school holidays.

- We have robust systems and structures for attendance, and review them regularly
- We use data analysis to make sure no pupils fall through the attendance gap
- We engage outside agencies to help manage persistent absentees

7. Attendance monitoring

Attendance Protocol

- This protocol sets out how we improve and support parents in improving attendance.
- We will have regular monthly vulnerable children team meetings to review the attendance of specific children and to review the processes and protocols we use to improve the attendance of individuals and the whole school.
- The headteacher will produce an attendance report every week. This will include the overall, termly and weekly attendance of the school and groups in the school. It will also contain a report on the number of low attendees in the school.
- It is our aim for children to be in school every day, all day. Our target for attendance for every child is 100%.
- The key way to ensure that attendance does not drop below an acceptable level is to contact parents and inform them of any attendance issues in a timely and appropriate way.

- Children with 100% attendance in any term will receive a congratulatory certificate from the headteacher.
- The parents of any child whose cumulative attendance drops below 92% will receive a letter from the headteacher containing the attendance certificate, expressing concern about the level of absence and asking them to ensure that it improves. *(Letter 1)*
- The parents of any child who has an attendance below 92% in any term will receive a letter from the headteacher containing the attendance certificate, expressing concern about the level of absence and asking them to ensure that it improves. *(Letter 2)*
- Children with persistent or patterned absence will be contacted by the school to ensure that this is addressed and that it improves.
- If children have appointments during school time an appointment card or similar proof of an appointment will be asked for to ensure that as little time as possible is lost for learning.
- The classes with the best attendance in any week in both Key Stages will get five minutes' extra play time; this will be announced in the Friday assembly.
- If the school's cumulative attendance exceeds a given target the whole school will receive five minutes' extra play time; this will be announced in the Friday assembly.

STEP ONE (Yellow)

- Class teachers' will be informed, by the vulnerable children team, after each meeting of pupils in their class where there are concerns about attendance.
- The class teacher will speak to parents of children at collection/drop off every time a child above returns after an absence. If the parents do not drop off/collect a phone call will be made, or an email sent. A note should be left on the attendance part of sims confirming contact made.

STEP TWO (Amber)

- If a child is on step one and their attendance does not improve they will receive a letter from the headteacher pointing out the figures from attendance and the possible consequences. (Letter 3)
- A phone call will be made by someone on the attendance team every time a child is absent (rather than a text).

STEP THREE (red)

- If a child is on step 2 and attendance has not improved after a term the parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and another member of staff as appropriate and asked to sign a parenting contract. (Letter 4)
- Phone calls will continue.

Parenting Contracts

Parenting contracts are voluntary and consist of a written agreement between a parent and the school. These can also be completed with a child/young person where appropriate. These should contain:

- A statement agreed by all parties to address any issues which in turn will support the attendance process for the child and thereby assist the parent in complying with the contract.

- A timeframe within which to improve the attendance.

Parenting contracts are a useful tool in identifying and focusing on the issues behind the pupil's poor school attendance and in developing a productive relationship between parents, children / young people and schools to address the issues.

The parent cannot be compelled to enter into a parenting contract but it should be considered by all parties. It must also be noted that refusal to enter into a parenting contract agreement may be used as evidence in the event any future legal action in relation to attendance.

The parents of children who have agreed a parenting contract will be phoned on their first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence, rather than in the usual text.

STEP FOUR (Dark red)

- If the attendance has not improved the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

STEP FIVE (Blue)

- Other agencies are involved in attendance as there are issues beyond attendance.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will
- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The School Will
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by the Head teacher. 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