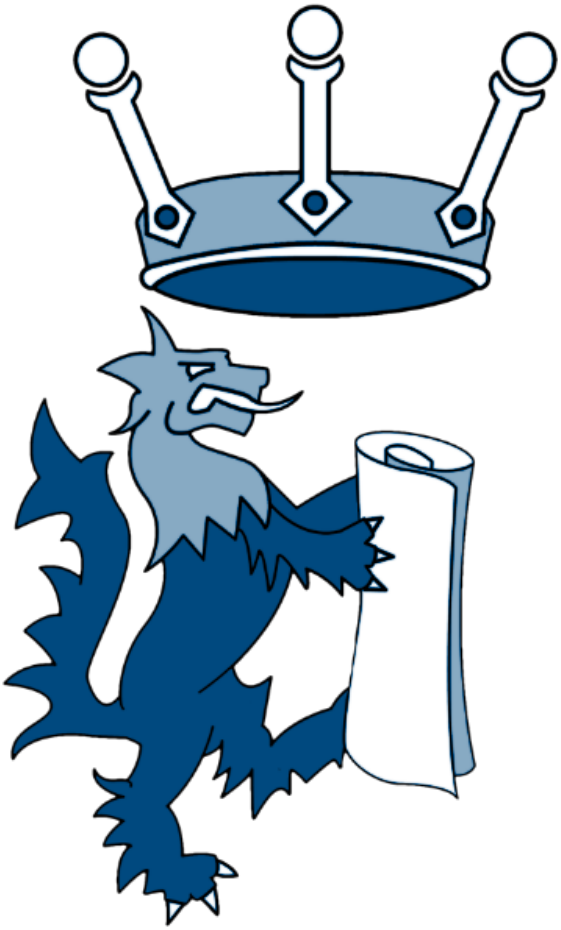
Attendance Policy

The Sittingbourne School



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1. Introduction

The Sittingbourne School encourages 100% attendance and punctuality for all students. The school expects all students to attend regularly and arrive at lessons on time, in order to take full advantage and access the full-time educational opportunities they are entitled to. The expectation is that parents/carers will ensure that their child or young person arrives at school on time everyday and supports the school's policies and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.

In order to achieve excellent attendance, The Sittingbourne School provides a welcoming, safe and secure environment where students feel valued. In addition, the school works hard to create a stimulating and accessible curriculum with high quality teaching for every student, together with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Attendance is inevitably bound up within the ethos of The Sittingbourne School and the networks of relationships that exist within it.

2. Why regular attendance is important

Learning and Achievement: There is a clear link between high attendance and high achievement. We expect all students and parents/carers to know their attendance/absence from school.

- Of students who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve 5 GCSEs at the National Standard including English and Maths
- Of students who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve 5 GCSEs at the National Standard including English and Maths

- Of students who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve 5 GCSEs at the National Standard including English and Maths.

Safeguarding:

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend our school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter which can result in a welfare Police check being carried out.

3. Legal Framework

Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered.

If a child of compulsory school age, who is registered at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

4. School Responsibility

To encourage excellent attendance, the school:

- Ensures all staff understand their role in ensuring good attendance and punctuality, and in reducing absence including persistent absence.
- Provide regular attendance monitoring by Attendance Officers in conjunction with Pastoral and Safeguarding Teams, including acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure students with good and rapidly improving attendance and/or punctuality are recognised and rewarded.
- Ensure students with poor attendance and/or punctuality are investigated through school referral procedures and challenged through school and local authority sanctions.
- Ensure parents/carers are supported to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and are punctual in attending at the start of the school day and at the start of each lesson.
- Ensure students and their parents/carers are made aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and are informed of the consequences when it is not.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on how their child is performing at the school, what their attendance and punctuality rates are and how these relate to their attainment and progress.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying both individual and Year Group achievements (updated on a weekly basis/monthly basis where necessary.)
- Reward individual students' attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates issued in assemblies on a termly basis.
- Inform parents/carers through a letter or direct contact once their child's attendance falls below 98%, the student may be placed on monitoring with an attendance plan.
- Refer to SouthEastern Attendance Advisory Service if there is a concern with a student's attendance or a student's attendance falls below 96%.

5. Parents/carers responsibility

To encourage excellent attendance, parents/carers:

- Have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly and risk prosecution/fines if they fail in this duty. Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence.
- Cannot approve absences for their child.
- Should attempt to arrange appointments for their child or young person outside normal school hours whenever possible. Wherever possible the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.
- Ensures their children attend school on time.
- Communicate with the Attendance team regarding every absence. The parent must phone the Attendance line everyday for every absence. It is encouraged to leave a message if there is no answer on the telephone line.

6. Attendance team responsibility

To encourage excellent attendance, the attendance team:

- Carefully monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students.
- Identify any attendance problems and students that are at risk of persistent absence.
- Liaise closely with pastoral and safeguarding staff as well as the Headteacher to support attendance and punctuality initiatives.
- Ensure class teachers liaise proactively with the team to help identify and address attendance issues.
- Take relevant action where attendance is a cause for concern, e.g. telephone parents/carers to discuss the problem, make home visits, refer to SEAAS, organise meetings with parents/carers to decide on the appropriate intervention.
- Pursue enforcement action where no significant improvement has been made to attendance, as required by the 'Attendance Matters Pathway for School' (appendix 1). This is the process agress by the Local Authority and all schools to address irregular or non-school attendance.
- On discovering truancy, inform the student's parents/carers and Year Team the same day and ensure appropriate sanctions are applied.

7. Student responsibility

To encourage excellent attendance, students:

- Must ensure that they arrive promptly, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually.
- Discuss promptly with the Attendance Team any problems that may affect their attendance.
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.
- Provide medical evidence for any appointments that results in an absence.

NB. Permission to leave the site will normally only be given for fixed term exclusion, or authorised medical/dental appointments.

8. Teaching staff responsibility

To encourage excellent attendance, teaching staff:

- Monitor class attendance and report any cause for concern to the Attendance Officer/SLT staff member.
- Have frequent discussions with students about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Support students who have been absent in making up missed work.

- Ensure registers are taken on time and accurately.

NB: Subject teacher will follow up suspicious absences by informing the Year Team and Attendance Team immediately.

9. Registers

Registers are completed using the Academy's Bromcom information system (a paper copy is always available should the Bromcom system not be available).

Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes. (see Appendix 1). All schools are required by law to keep an attendance register and no gaps in registration can be left. The attendance register must be taken every lesson from the start of the first session of each school day (morning) and during the second sessions (afternoon) of the school day to mark whether every student is

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

Any amendments made to the register will include both the original and amended entry, reason and date of amendment and staff member making the amendment.

Registers must be taken within the first 20 minutes of each registration session. Failure to do so will result in a formal reminder and potentially a disciplinary action. The Attendance Team will check that teaching staff are completing registers promptly and accurately. (see appendix 2)

If a student arrives after the register has closed, s/he should report to reception to be entered as late. Students arriving after the registration has closed without an acceptable reason, will be marked as late or having an unauthorised absence for that session.

10. Illness during the school day

If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the day, a community call will be made by their Teacher. Students should not contact parents/carers directly. This will be counted as an unauthorised absence.

Staff will then assess the illness and make decisions about whether parents/carers need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home, wait and/or return to class.

No student should leave the school premises for such arising medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

In the event of a student being genuinely unwell and unable to continue with the school day, contact will be made with the parent/carer, In the interest of safeguarding the students, arrangements will be made for the student to be collected by parent/carer or other nominated family member.

Appropriate First Aid will be administered where deemed necessary by a trained First Aider.

11. Absence procedure

The Sittingbourne School will only authorise 5 days of illness per academic year provided contact has been made and deemed acceptable. All further absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. Please note the following are acceptable as medical evidence; appointment card, letter, sick note, appointment text or prescribed medication.

On the first day of a student's absence, parents/carers should contact the School to report the absence. This should be done by a telephone call/email to the attendance line and at the earliest opportunity (by 8:30am), giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. Parents/carers should contact the School on each subsequent day of absence.

If the absence involves physical injury, with implications upon the student's return to the School, a risk assessment will be carried out by the Health and Safety Lead for each specific case. All unauthorised absences will result in a text message/email being generated by our system to parents/carers.

The Sittingbourne School understands the difficulty of obtaining same-day GP appointments, however there are a number of walk-in clinics who provide confirmation of emergency appointments. Symptoms such as headaches, we advise your child taking suitable medication in the morning and attend school. We are unwilling to authorise a whole day's absence due to a 'headache' or feeling 'generally unwell'.

All contact should be made by phoning the Attendance office number on 01795 472449 Ext 1 or emailing TSS-Attendance@Swale.at

12. Understanding types of absences

Every half-day absence from our School has to be classified by the Attendance Officer (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Unauthorised absences are those The Sittingbourne School does not consider reasonable and which no "leave" have been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Absence for illness when attendance in below 97% unless medical evidence in provided;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have not been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Period pains
- Moving house

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) - A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls to 90% or below for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and the fullest support and cooperation is needed from parents/carers to tackle this.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority; parents/carers will be informed of this immediately and remedial action will be taken.

13. Punctuality procedure

Students arriving after registration time will receive a late mark (L) in the register. If a student is going to be late, parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the school of their child's lateness by telephone.

Registers close at 9:00am. Students arriving after this time must report to the attendance office/reception to sign in. After this time, the attendance mark will be coded as U, which is an unauthorised absence and will affect your attendance percentage.

A text message will be sent to parents/carers at 10:15am indicating absence if no contact has been made by parent/carer to explain this.

Avoidable and persistent lateness will result in detention.

Students will be challenged for poor punctuality as follows:

- Late to school will result in a detention
- Late marks to lessons will result in the following
    - A detention issued by the Year Team.
    - A letter being sent home to parent/guardian (3 or more)
    - Placed on an attendance report for punctuality

Ultimately, the parent/carer of a student/young person who frequently arrives late at school can be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure their child attends regularly.

14. Supporting and encouraging good attendance

Whilst any child or young person may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the School, the parents/carers and the child or young person. If a child or young person is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Condoning absence, particularly at an early age, can lead to habitual patterns of non-attendance and can give students the impression that attendance does not matter.

Parents/carers can support students by:

- Ensure regular routines and early bedtimes.
- Helping with homework.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting and academic or social concerns promptly to the school.
- Retaining an open and honest communication with the child or young person's school.
- Being positive about school (even if a parent/carer's own experience was less than positive.)

Strategies to promote good attendance in school:

- The Sittingbourne School will provide an environment in which students feel safe, valued and welcome. Our ethos must demonstrate that students feel their presence is important and that it is vital for their achievement and progress. Students need to know they will be missed and any absence will be followed up by their relevant Year Team or the Attendance Team.
- Students who feel vulnerable and experience difficulties attending class or have friendship problems will be supported and given strategies to help them cope. The Pastoral Managers will be a key member of staff involved liaising with their teachers.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all students. Special provision will be made for identified students and a mentoring scheme exists to promote confidence and well-being.
- A clearly defined and consistent approach to positive behaviour management exists to provide a fair system and support for all students, especially those who have difficulties; focusing on rewarding the positive.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to students' needs and support is available whenever possible.
- Attendance data will be produced and monitored regularly and analysed in order to identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support.
- High attendance will be recognised and awarded regularly.
- Students whose attendance is a cause for concern will be monitored closely and discussed in weekly meetings.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, letters home, text messages, SEAAS, MCAS messages etc.) of the importance of regular attendance.
- Daily phone calls will be made for unexplained absences.
- Home visit may be organised for students that have consecutive unexplained absences.

- Students who have been absent for an extended period of time, or who are experiencing serious attendance problems, will have individually tailored programmes to support them.
- School staff will liaise with other services/agencies that may assist students who are experiencing difficulties.
- Pastoral Managers, SENCo, the Attendance Officer, SEAAS attendance officer and Assistant Headteacher will have regular meetings where attendance issues are discussed.
- The Assistant Headteacher will report to the Governing body at least every second term on attendance matters.

15. Leave of absences (holidays)

The Sittingbourne School's Headteacher is no longer able to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. The headteacher may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any student absent during term time, unless granted by the headteacher because of exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as 'unauthorised' absence.

Parents/carers must apply through the Leave of Absence form on the website to take a student out of school for a holiday. The Attendance Team will notify the parent in writing of this decision to refuse/grant permission and will code accordingly. Parents who disregard this and still take their child on holiday will receive a letter informing them of a request for a penalty notice and to ask them to ensure their child has good attendance for the rest of the year (minimum 96%). (see appendix 3)

A fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority where 'a student has been taken on a holiday during term time, the absence has not been authorised by the school, and the child's attendance is below the Local Authority average for the previous school year or 3 terms.'

The penalty is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receiving a notice and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days.

16. Analysing and reporting attendance data

The Attendance Team reviews attendance on a daily basis and monitors this continually, producing reports on a weekly basis. These reports compare attendance data with the national average, previous years and are shared with the schools Strategy Team and the Challenge Committee.

All teachers should look for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the Attendance Team and/or Pastoral Teams as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 96% the cause will be investigated by the school's Attendance Team who will liaise with SEAAS and parents/carers.

17. Monitoring attendance and punctuality at off site provision

Where students attend external provision, weekly registration certificates are received from the external providers. These are monitored and any concerns reported to the Attendance Team/SLT.

18. SouthEastern Advisory Attendance Services

SEAAS are an outside company employed by The Swale Academies Trust to monitor students concerning attendance levels. The attendance officer will have access to the schools information system, Bromcom. The attendance officer from SEAAS will work with Year Teams weekly highlighting students who fall below the expected 96% level attendance. A pre-referral letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that SEAAS will now be monitoring the attendance of their child. (see appendix 4 for the process)

19. Prosecution procedure

Reducing unauthorised absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and learning of others.

Truanting can also leave a student vulnerable to antisocial behaviour and youth crime. Truanting lessons during a school day is an non negotiable at this school and will result in students losing their free time.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Parents/carers are legally responsible for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually. This applies even if children are missing school without the knowledge of their parent/carer.

20. Penalty Notices

In line with the Local Authority 'Attendance Matters Pathway for School', parents/carers can be prosecuted, fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child or young person attends school regularly and punctually. Alternatively, the Local Authority may supervise a family for at least a year or until attendance improves to a satisfactory level, under the terms of an Education Supervision Order.

21. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures and refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census which explains the persistent Absence threshold. These 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 (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Appendices

The following codes are used for recording absence and attendance in schools; these codes are set out in the Department for Education's guidance on school attendance.

Appendix One: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised Absence		
C	Authorised Leave of Absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances.
E	Excluded	Students have been excluded but no alternative provision has been made.
H	Authorised Holiday	Students have been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances.
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness.
M	Medical/Dental Appointment	Students are at a medical or dental appointment.

R	Religious Observance	Students are taking part in a day of religious observance.
S	Study Leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their GCSEs
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Absence	Students from a Traveller community are travelling, as agreed with the school.
Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school.
N	Reason not provided	Students is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with the reason for the student's absence.
U	Arrival after registration.	Students arrived at school after the register closed.

Administrative Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school.	Students of non-compulsory school age are not required to attend. Students affected by Coronavirus.
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel or the student is in custody.
Z	Student not an admission register.	Register set up but the student has not yet joined the school.
#	Planned School Closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day.

Appendix Two: Register Procedure

The Sittingbourne School takes the safety of its students to the highest degree. Below outlines the Register Procedure that all staff **must adhere to**. Any error(s) on the registers throughout the day will receive a warning. This can be for a variety of reasons including taking a register late, marking a student absent when in lesson or vice versa.

It is with utmost importance that all staff are taking accurate registers in order for the Attendance Team to identify as soon as possible when a student is missing. If three errors are made, a meeting with the Headteacher takes place where it can be decided if disciplinary action is needed depending on the circumstance.

In the event Bromcom is not working, you must have the ER1 form printed/downloaded so this can be sent to the Attendance office. You only need to mark the students who are absent. Please ensure all of the information is completed on the form i.e. class code, staff code, date.

Please speak to Mrs O Wheeler if you need to discuss this procedure in length.

Tier	Number of errors	Consequence	Codes
1	*1*	*Email from attendance officer and copy in Subject Leader/QA and OJA. Attendance to informally meet.*	*Taking a register late*
2	*2*	*Email from OJA and meeting with DHT*	*Not taking a register for your class*
3	*3*	*Meeting with Headteacher*	*Marking a student present, when absent*
			Marking a student absent, when present
			Not updating a register with a late mark when a student arrives late to your lesson.
			Students in Year group offices/activities/LINK/mentoring, and not informing attendance.
			Entering a wrong code

Appendix Three: Leave of absence form

We strongly advise that you do not take your child out of school during term time for a holiday. This could be very detrimental to their learning.

Government regulations* state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can leave from school if the leave is granted.

Parents should apply for the leave, using this Leave of Absence Form, at least 3 weeks prior to the absence. The Head of school will make a decision based on the conditions described above. Leave cannot be granted retrospectively and Penalty Notices will be requested for each parent/guardian for unauthorised absences.

A parent who is not happy with the Head of School's decision has the right of appeal to the Trust Principal. The decision of the Trust Principal is final.

*Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013

In order for your absence request to be considered, the below document is required to be completed in full.

Date completed:	

Student name:	
Year Group:	

Dates of Absence	
Date from:	
Date to:	
Number of school days:	

Please attach any relevant documents to support the absence request.

Reason for absence

Parent/Guardian Name (print name):	
Signature of parent/guardian:	

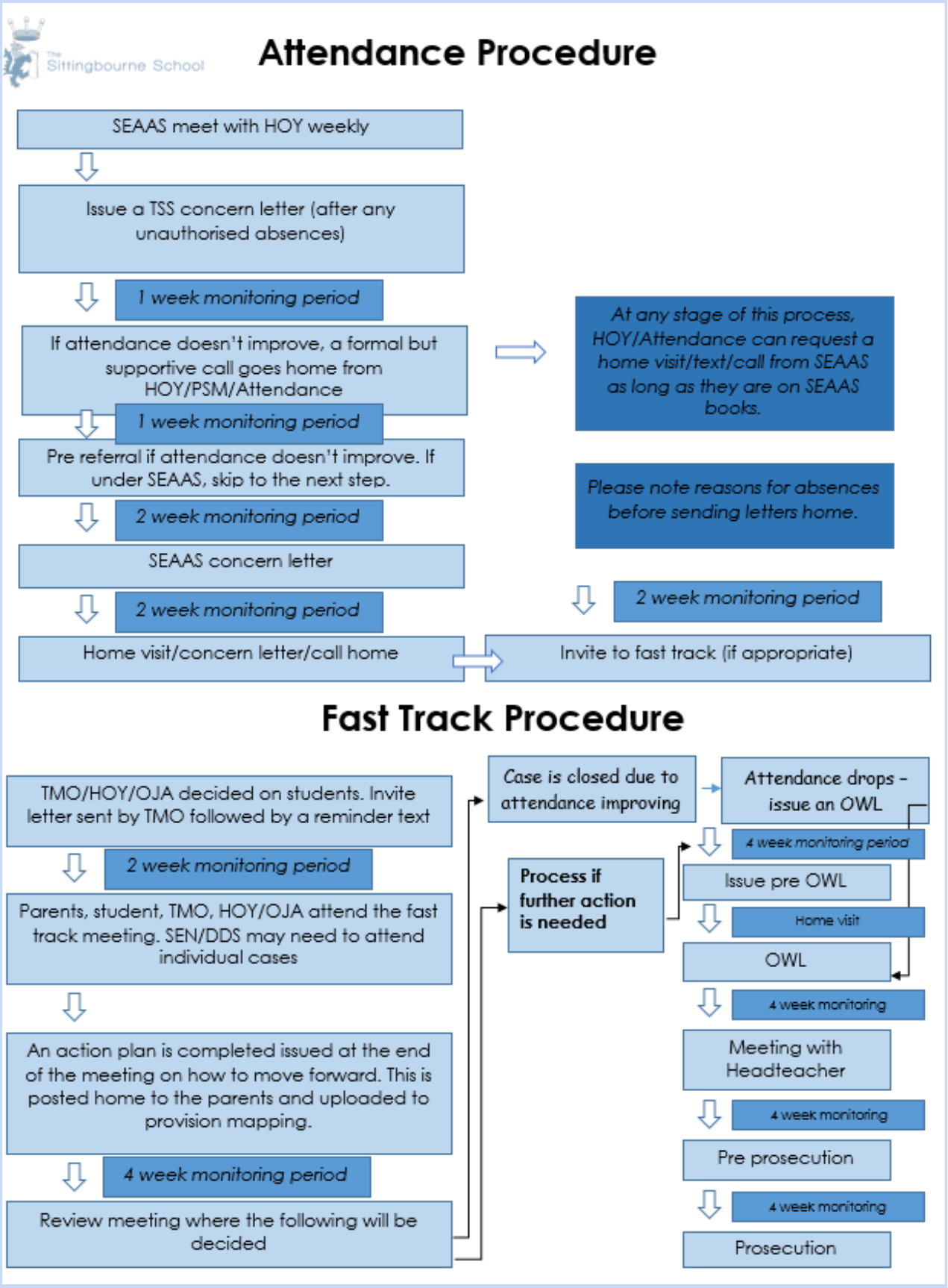
Contact Details	
Address:	
Email Address:	
Mobile Number:	
Home Number:	

Attendance Office Use

Current Attendance Percentage	%

Please Tick

Authorised:	
Unauthorised:	

Signed Attendance Team:	

Appendix Four: Attendance procedure including SEAAS