



Attendance Policy

The Sittingbourne School

September 2025

Approved by: Board of Governors

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Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance](#) (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of 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 make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

People, roles and responsibilities

Person	Role	Contact
Mr A Campbell	DHT - Attendance Champion	alex.campbell@swale.at
Mr E Martel	AHT - Key Stage 3 Attendance Lead	edward.martel@swale.at
Mr A Webb	AHT - Key Stage 4 Attendance Lead	adam.webb@swale.at
Ms N Jones	Head of Sixth Form & KS5 Attendance Lead	nicci.jones@swale.at
Mrs C Heed	Sixth Form Systems Officer	carole.heed@swale.at
Mrs S Baker	Attendance Officer	tss-attendance@swale.at
Mrs C Charles-Votava	Attendance Officer	tss-attendance@swale.at
Mrs T Morris	Trust Attendance Officer	tina.morris@swale.at

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer.
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The 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, and/or authorising Attendance Officers to be able to do so
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance

The designated senior leaders for attendance are responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

3.4 The Attendance Officers

The school attendance officers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that school registers are accurate, including contacting parents/carers to establish reasons for a child's absence
- Meeting with parents/carers when attendance falls below 97%
- Monitoring, analysing and disseminating attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the senior leadership team.
- Recording reasons from parents/carers for absence on the school system

3.5 The Trust Attendance Officer

The trust attendance officer is responsible for:

- Meeting with parents/carers when attendance falls below 90%
- Working with Kent County Council and other agencies to tackle persistent and severe absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Making home visits to establish the whereabouts and/or safeguarding of children where parents/carers have not reported reasons for absence

3.6 Class teachers and form tutors

Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for accurately recording attendance for morning and afternoon sessions and every lesson on a daily basis using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely fashion.

3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every school day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence providing a reason for this absence
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance agreements or contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance by contacting the school attendance team
- Ensure that their child attends all external examinations

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day by 8:35am (the school gates open at 8:10am)

Recording Attendance

4.1 The school attendance register

We will keep an electronic 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- The nature of the activity, where 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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:35am and ends at 3:10pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:35am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:35am and will be kept open until 9:05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:25pm and will be kept open until 1:55pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am by contacting the school - tss-attendance@swale.at, 01795 472449, or via the [website contact form](#).

Sixth Form students and their parents should email tss-sixthform@swale.at or call 07810 607159.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as unauthorised unless a parent or carer is able to contact the school to explain why. As per the [DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) guidance, The Sittingbourne School will request reasonable medical evidence 'in cases where they need clarification to accurately record absence' or if the school has 'genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the absence'.

4.3 Planned absence

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

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where pupils attend a morning medical or dental appointment, they should attend school for the afternoon session. Where pupils attend an afternoon appointment, they should attend school for the morning session.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code and a sanction may be used in accordance with the school behaviour policy
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code and a sanction may be used in accordance with the school behaviour policy
- Repeated lateness after the register has closed may result in a Penalty Notice

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 on each day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may instigate a home visit by the Trust Attendance Officer and contact Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS)
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer

- Offer support to the pupil and/or parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Consider a referral to the Trust Attendance Officer, KPAS or Penalty Notice as appropriate

Authorised and unauthorised Absences

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- 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.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible by contacting the school attendance office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness, including mental-health illness, and medical/dental appointments where evidence is provided
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) 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
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

5.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by him), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

For further information on Penalty Notices, please follow this link - [KCC Attendance](#)

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Supporting pupils returning to school

6.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Where barriers to attendance are complex the school will use bespoke interventions to support families to overcome these barriers, this may include the use of Early Help, Kent PRU and Attendance Service, Trust Attendance Officer, the school Wellbeing Team, Year Teams and where deemed necessary home visits.

6.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

Where pupils are absent from school for fewer than 15 school days due to authorised mental and/or physical ill health, the school may provide work for them to complete via Google Classroom.

Where pupils are absent from school for 15 or more school days due to authorised mental and/or physical ill health, the school will make a referral to Kent PRU and Attendance Service to arrange for alternative education methods.

6.3 Pupils absent with SEND

Where a pupil has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the pupil's needs, the SEND team will liaise with parents/carers to support a prompt return to education.

Monitoring Attendance

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) regularly at a whole school, individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE. [DfE Privacy Information](#)

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences are a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- 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:

- Provides targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences are a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provides regular attendance reports to relevant stakeholders to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators and designated safeguarding leads)
- Uses data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

- Shares information and works collaboratively with local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupils' attendance drops below 90%. Severe absence is where a pupil's attendance drops below 50%.

Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to identify patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school and/or local authority considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)
- Communicate with parents/carers of absent pupils through text messages, letters, phone calls and meetings to explain the school's next steps in improving their child's attendance

8. Attendance in Sixth Form

At The Sittingbourne School we believe that excellent attendance is crucial for academic success in the Sixth Form. Our Level 3 courses are demanding and every lesson provides valuable teaching and study time that students cannot afford to miss.

Consistent attendance directly impacts academic progress and students should aim for at least 96% attendance throughout the year. Achieving this demonstrates dedication, strong motivation, organisation and a mature approach to responsibilities - qualities highly valued both academically and professionally.

Full details of the Sixth Form attendance policy can be found in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Attendance in Sixth Form

Stakeholder Responsibilities

Sixth Form students are expected to

- Attend regularly, on time and ready to learn
- Attend all lessons and arrive to all lessons on time
- Make sure that they sign in on arrival to school using either the sign in app (Sixth Form area only) or via the tablet outside the Sixth Form area. They must also sign out each time they leave the building throughout the day. It is a legal requirement that we know who is on the school site at all times.
- Tell a member of Sixth Form Team if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school
- Make every effort to make dental/medical and optician appointments and driving lessons outside of school hours
- Provide a written request if they need to arrive late or leave early for an appointment or will be absent from school for a full/half day. This should be written and signed by a parent and given to the Sixth Form office at the earliest opportunity.
- Schedule part time work outside of the school day
- Take holidays outside of term time
- Attend all Sixth Form events required of them in the school day regardless of usual timetabled schedule
- Ensure that they complete the course on which they are enrolled, including attending all scheduled external examinations.

Parents are expected to

- Fulfil their responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, on time and prepared for the day
- Contact school by telephone on the first day their child is absent for any reason by 8.30am and then on all subsequent days by 8.30am
- Speak to a member of Sixth Form Team if they know of any problem which may prevent their child from attending school
- Not allow their child to take holidays in school time
- Provide evidence to support absence such as an appointment card/letter, or to provide a note, signed by the parent, school explaining the reason for absence
- Complete an absence request form to request exceptional leave of absence
- Ensure that their child prioritises school above part time work
- Ensure that their child completes the course on which they are enrolled, including attending all scheduled external examinations.

The Sixth Form will

- Promote good attendance and punctuality at school
- Recognise and reward regular attendance to school
- Accurately record and monitoring absence
- Take prompt action when a problem has been identified
- Regularly communicate with students and parents regarding absence.

The School Day

Students are expected to arrive at school at 8:35am daily and are required to attend until lunchtime or the end of the school day if they have lessons period 5/6. As well as timetabled lessons students also have non-contact periods on their timetables for independent study. Students who maintain an attendance of 96% or higher and are meeting course expectations over the course of the term will be granted more flexibility in their timetable for the following term. If students are granted this privilege we would expect them to be committed to spending their time effectively and it may be withdrawn if a student is not meeting his/her work commitments. In such cases students will be scheduled to work within school.

Absence Procedure

If students are absent from school or from a lesson and we have received no communication, from either the student or a parent, we will contact the student to provide a reason for absence to enable attendance records to be updated; if no reply is received, then we will contact a parent to provide a reason. If there is still no reason provided then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Should the absence continue into a third day with no communication with the student or parent then this will be recorded as a safeguarding incident due to concerns for the students safety and wellbeing. Safeguarding procedures will then be followed with the possibility of home visits being carried out by a member of the Sixth Form team or SEASS.

In the event of students taking any period of absence from Sixth Form, without informing the Sixth Form before or on the day of the absence, they will be asked to complete a 'Sixth Form Return From Absence Form', which can be found in the year group Google Classroom. In this they will be asked to confirm the period and reasons for this absence. It will also allow a member of staff to meet with the student in order to discuss this absence with the student, put in any support required for missing work and identify any potential barriers to attendance that may require further support from the Sixth Form team.

We acknowledge that there may be occasions where a student may be authorised to be absent from Sixth Form. These circumstances include:

- Interviews for courses/employment that will begin after the end of their time in Sixth Form. Students should not miss lessons to attend interviews, shifts and inductions for part time work.
- University, Apprenticeship and Employer Open Days – students may attend no more than two of these events in an academic year without permission from the Sixth Form team.
- Work experience – requests for term time leave for essential work experience (e.g. medicine, law) will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. These requests should be submitted at least a month in advance. Leave of absence will not be given to enable a student to undertake employment during school hours. Parents may wish to note that there is a scheduled week of work experience within Year 12. Please contact the school if you require further details.

Should attendance fall below expected standards the school will be unable to confidently confirm that students are meeting the requirements for full time education. This can have serious implications for bursary eligibility, evidence required for child benefit and continued enrolment at the school. The school may charge parents for exam entry 'if a pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus'¹.

If a student does not attend school for 20 consecutive school days and there is no agreed plan to return, their place will be withdrawn.

Rewards

Good attendance is crucial for success in Sixth Form and we believe in recognising this commitment. Students who maintain excellent attendance will be eligible for a range of rewards throughout the academic year. These include weekly and termly prize draws for individual students who have 100% attendance within these time frames. Weekly prizes are also on offer to the tutor group with the best weekly attendance.

Attendance concerns

We are keen to identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity to give parents, students and the school the ability to intervene and prevent further decline. Attendance and punctuality concerns will be addressed using the Sixth Form attendance concern process. When applying these stages, individual circumstances will be taken into consideration. Parents will be kept informed of all steps taking place.

¹ Government paper: Charging for school activities

Sixth Form Attendance Concern Process

Step One

Tutor Intervention

Meeting held with any student whose attendance to school is between 90% - 95%
Attendance monitored by tutor for the remainder of term or until attendance hits 96%



Step Two

Pastoral Support Intervention

Meeting with student and parents whose attendance is between 85% - 89%
Personal Attendance Plan completed and Extended Timetable issued



Step Three

Deputy Head of Sixth Form Intervention

Meeting with student and parents whose attendance is between 80% - 84%
Personal Attendance Plan updated and full-time timetable issued



Step Four

Head of Sixth Form Intervention

Meeting with student and parents whose attendance is below 80%
Attendance Agreement completed and students not allowed off site during the school day



Step Five

Review meeting with the Head of Sixth Form to review viability of Sixth Form place
Students meet with the Head of Sixth Form after every day of absence