ATTENDANCE POLICY

Equalities Statement

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors.

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Roles and contact Details		
Role	**Name**	**Contact details**
Attendance Officers	Mrs C Charles-Votava - Year 7 Mr J Jones - Year 8 and 9 Mrs S Baker - Year 10 and 11 Mrs M Knight Sixth Form	tss-attendance@swale.at 01795472449 tss-sixthform@swale.at 01795472449
Attendance Champion	Alex Campbell	Alex.campbell@swale.at 01795472449
Designated Senior Lead	Alex Campbell	Alex.campbell@swale.at 01795472449
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Orla Wheeler	orla.wheeler@swale.at 01795472449
Local Authority (LA) Education Welfare Service	Kent County Council (KCC) education services	www.kent.gov.uk 03000 41 21 21

1. Aims

1.1 It is the aim of The Sittingbourne School that pupils should experience a vibrant inclusive community that transforms lives and broadens horizons through excellent teaching and learning. Our mission is to inspire children to flourish and achieve their best. The Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils.

1.2 We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos. We value relationship-based practice that achieves good attendance, including:

- Promoting regular attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Recognising and celebrating individual successes.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled. ● Taking early action 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. Barriers such as poor attendance will hinder,delay or stop their progress.

Studies have shown that frequent absence from school can have a serious negative impact on your child's education. There is a perception from both students and parents that 90% attendance is good, however 90% attendance is the equivalent of one and half days off each week.

1.3 Improving attendance is everyone's business. This policy should be read alongside the annual review of the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This policy is included in the required reading list for all new employees. All team members know the importance of good attendance and support the whole-school approach by communicating consistent high expectations.

2. Legislation and Guidance

2.1 This policy applies all the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) from the Department for Education (DfE), and the DfE's statutory guidance on School attendance parental responsibilities responsibility measures Statutory guidance template (publishing.service.gov.uk). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of Education Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Part 3 of Education Act 2002 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Part 7 of Education and Inspections Act 2006 (legislation.gov.uk)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (legislation.gov.uk)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (legislation.gov.uk)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

2.2 In addition, this policy incorporates the following guidance from the DfE:

- Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Children missing education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Keeping children safe in education 2025 - GOV.UK

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Governance

The Board of Trustees, through the Education and Standards Committee, are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across our policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

The Trust Executive Team are responsible for:

- regularly monitoring attendance data, providing challenge and support to the school as necessary

The Local Governing Body are responsible for:

- Receiving attendance data and information via the termly Headteacher's report, providing scrutiny and escalating concerns to the Trust Executive and/or Board of Trustees as necessary.

- Monitoring the application of the Attendance Policy
- Providing parental and community feedback to the school on the impact and effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

3.2 **The Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Facilitating training for all team members on attendance.
- Supporting team members with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Review and decision-making of all requests for planned absences by parents/carers. ● Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Attending court hearings as required by the Local Authority.

3.3 **The Designated Senior Leader for Attendance/Attendance champion**

The Attendance Lead is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Overseeing data analysis including for vulnerable cohorts.
- Implementing trust attendance strategies to address absenteeism.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Engaging with school safeguarding triangulation meetings.
- Coordinating, with the DSL, any required outreach and welfare visits.
- Liaison with LA education welfare services.
- Timely completion of referrals to internal services and external agencies.
- Actively participate in termly attendance meetings with School Improvement Support team members.
- Providing recommendations to the Headteacher on LA legal interventions (e.g. Court Proceedings, School Attendance Orders, Education Supervision Orders).

3.4 **The Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring all registers are completed accurately and on time.
- Recording reasons for absences provided by parents/carers.
- Following up on all unexplained absences and informing the DSL of any absences of vulnerable children each morning.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7).
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to the school community.
- Escalating patterns of non-attendance to the Head of Attendance and Admission,

reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, DSL and Headteacher.

- Working with LA education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Headteacher on the application of fixed-penalty notices.

3.5 **Mentors, Teachers And Pastoral Teams**

Mentors, Teachers And Pastoral Team are responsible for:

- Meet and greet pupils each day, including daily attendance conversations.
- Have responsibility for accurately recording pupil attendance each session/lesson, by using the available absent or present register codes. The register must be submitted with accuracy and on time to ensure attendance colleagues can address unexplained absences.
- Inform the safeguarding team of any attendance concerns.
- Engage with whole school approaches in ensuring attendance is promoted and celebrated.
- Immediately report any incidents of suspected truancy to the Attendance/Behavioural team

Year Teams will work closely to ensure that welfare concerns are triangulated with attendance patterns.

3.6 **Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and is 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 and advise when they are expected to return.
- Specify the reason for any absence, enabling the attendance officer to apply the correct absence code in the register.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the attendance team or pastoral team who can be contacted by telephone or email.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child and a contactable email address.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Avoid taking planned absences during term time. See 4.3.
- Work in partnership with the school to promote good attendance and punctuality habits ensuring your child's regular attendance at school as this is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.
- Adhere to any attendance support plans or contracts made with the school and or local authority.

Note**:** Where the policy refers to a parent/carer it refers to the adult the school and or the 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)

3.7 **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Must ensure they arrive on time, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually.
- Discuss promptly with their year team or attendance team any problems that may affect their attendance
- Attend school appropriately appeared for the day

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 **Attendance**

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. In addition, we will keep a register of all timetabled lessons.

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:

- Whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- 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.

The school opens at 8.30am and closes at 3.10pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.
The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.35am and will be kept open until 9.05am.
The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1.25pm and will be kept open until 1.55pm.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Records must be maintained and kept appropriately according to the Trust Retention Schedule.

4.2. **Unplanned Absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on each day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school attendance office.

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. If no explanation is received absences will not be authorised.

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.

4.3 **Planned Absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Please see above for evidence requests if the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the appointment.

If a pupil is present at registration but has a medical appointment during the session in question, no absence needs be recorded for that session.
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. See section 5.

Parents should request leaves of absence via Withdrawal from Learning form obtained at the school office, attendance team, or available on the school website.

4.4 **Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)

After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

If a pupil arrives after the register has closed this will (be) an unauthorised absence unless prior details about the absence have been shared and authorised by the Headteacher.

4.5 **Following up unexplained absence**

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on each morning of an unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- 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.
- If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a welfare visit at the pupil's home address, seek advice from Children's Social Care and/or contact the police.
- To further ensure safeguarding actions are taken where necessary. If the absence continues, the school will consider referral to an education welfare officer and/or Children's Social Care, or any other relevant services.

4.6 **Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will share attendance information frequently with parents/carers, for example at each parents evening and on school reports. We will provide parents/carers with a copy of their child's attendance summary for the academic year in Term 6.

If parents/carers wish to see a copy of their child's attendance summary at any other time during the year, they can ask for a printed copy at the school office.

Where a pupil's attendance drops below 96% (this equates to 7 missed school days in a year) the school may contact parents/carers to highlight this, unless there is a good reason not to.

Parents/carers to be advised that we do make referrals to the Local Authority for legal action such as Court Judgments or Fixed Penalty notices.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

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 will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, in accordance with local and national guidance, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. ● The school will not authorise any leave of absence in term-time unless satisfied the reason for absence is exceptional.

- The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. This includes consultation with other team members as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.** If Illness occurs either side of unauthorised or authorised leave we will NOT authorise those sick days. We may also require evidence of passports, tickets and original booking of leave along with medical evidence for illness.
- Parents/carers are asked not to make plans to take their child out of school without making a request to the school first.
- Any request should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the absence, via the Withdrawal from Learning request form, available via the school office.
- Parents may be required to provide the school with additional evidence in order to support a leave of absence request.
- The school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence cannot be granted.
- The absence should be for the shortest time possible – if an absence is agreed, the Headteacher will decide how many days of absence will be authorised. If the pupil is absent for more days than were authorised by the school, the remaining days will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- Any other absence such as trips and visits which have not been agreed in writing by the school, will be recorded as unauthorised.

- Parents/carers should be aware (that) an unauthorised absence may result in a Penalty Notice or Prosecution. See 5.2 for more information.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail) If your child is leaving the school for an illness they MUST be collected.
- Religious observance. This is '*a day exclusively set apart for religious observance'* when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong, to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. The school may seek further advice from the parent's religious body regarding the absence. If a religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent applies for more than one day, the school may only record one day as authorised on this basis; the rest of the request would be considered as a leave of absence.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes. This includes 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.
- Suspension. When a pupil has been suspended or excluded from the school.
- Taking part in a regulated performance
- A temporary reduced timetable - see page 25 Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024
- Exceptional circumstances that have been agreed by the Headteacher.

5.2 **Unauthorised Absence:**

Is where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for the absence, or where no reason has been provided. Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions. See 5.3 for further details.

Unauthorised absence includes, but is not limited to:

- Absences that have not been explained within 5 days of occurrence.
- Parent/carer's keeping children off school unnecessarily (persistent nonspecific illness eg. poorly/unwell/headache/sore throat/period pains).
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason (distance taken into consideration).
- Arriving at the school after the register has closed (unless by prior authorisation).
- Family trips and excursions, including birthdays and weddings.
- Moving house
- Inadequate uniform
- Family Holidays in term time (see details in section 5.1)
- Absences due to an illness of a family member or sibling.

NB: Schools will only accept a child's medical unfit for school letter from a consultant of which the child is under their care and not a GP statutory sick note which is aimed for adults and their employees. This is an official document for the department of working pensions (DWP). Provision of medical certificates for school children is not part of a GP's responsibility, and declining to provide this certification is in accordance with the government policy to reduce GP bureaucracy and reserve valuable GP time for clinical care.

Parents/carers should seek advice and support from the school when experiencing barriers in securing regular attendance.

If the school has cause for concern regarding the reason for a pupil's absence, we may seek additional information or evidence from parents/carers regarding the absence, and make an outreach visit to the family home in order to verify the reason and offer additional support. If the reason cannot be verified and the school has cause to believe the reason given for absence may not be genuine, parents/carers may be asked to provide satisfactory proof of the reason before the school authorises the absence. If satisfactory proof is not provided, the school may record the absence as unauthorised.

5.3 **Legal interventions**

We will work with families, the Local Authority, and other partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where this is not successful, or not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise improvement plans and parental contracts. Attendance legal interventions are used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions are made on an individual case by case basis.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for Local Authority legal action as required by local guidance and national legislation. We will not refer if there are reasonable grounds for not doing so.
When referring for legal sanctions, the school will provide evidence that the parent/carer has been warned they are at risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal sanctions. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Fixed Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

The school adheres to the Local Authority Code of Conduct regarding the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines).

The Local Authority or Police can issue Penalty Notices to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, each parent (including step parent or person with day to day responsibility) must pay £80 (per child) within 21 days or £160 (per child) within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account (take account of)

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year and a rolling 10 school week period.
- 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.

Legal Sanction	Potential Outcome	Example Use
Fixed Penalty Notice Prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996	The penalty is £80 (per parent/carer, per child) payable within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay may result in prosecution. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in installments unless agreed by the local authority. Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period. The second notice within this period is charged at a flat rate of £160.	For low level offences, as a tool to support improved attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's unauthorised absence. If a pupil has an extended period or repeated periods of unauthorised absence, a prosecution may be considered instead of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
	If found guilty, parents/carers may be fined up to £2500 and ordered to pay court costs. The court may also impose a **Parenting Order**.	The Local Authority will determine whether a section 444(1) or section 444(1A) prosecution is most appropriate. First prosecutions are usually under s444(1).

Legal Sanction	Potential Outcome	Example Use
Prosecution under section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996	If found guilty, parents/carers may be fined up to £2500 and ordered to pay court costs. Other court outcomes include community sentences, such as **Curfew Orders, Unpaid Work (Community Payback)** or a **prison sentence of up to three months.** The court may also impose a **Parenting Order**.	If a parent/carer is prosecuted more than once, or in extreme cases of non-attendance, the Local Authority may decide to prosecute under s444(1A).
Education Supervision Order (ESO) under section 36 of the Children Act 1989	The order is placed on the child and a supervisor from the Local Authority is appointed by the court, to give directions to the child and its parents, with a view to ensuring that the child is properly educated. Parents can be prosecuted if they persistently fail to comply with a direction.	The Local Authority must consider applying for an ESO before prosecuting under s444 Education Act 1996. A Local Authority may apply for an ESO instead of, or as well as, proceeding with a prosecution.

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

One of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, the school strives to provide a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents/carers. The school will regularly reward good and improved attendance with different incentives and initiatives.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality the school aims to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers, pupils, and team members.

- Work in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the wider family.

7. Attendance improvement

7.1 **Improving Attendance**

Improving attendance is everyone's business and must be a whole school approach. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that the school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

7.2 **Attendance Management**

The school implements improvement interventions within our (the) trust attendance management processes. The attendance team and wider school teams complete daily, weekly, and termly actions that focus on preventative and early interventions in the first instance.

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual pupils and families. All school-led interventions are bespoke to the individual needs of pupils and will incorporate a holistic and coordinated package of support to increase the chance of successful outcomes. This approach ensures that pupils and cohorts with additional vulnerabilities are effectively supported to reduce absenteeism.
School-led interventions will always incorporate regular opportunities for pupil and parent voice.

7.3 **Levels of Support and Intervention**

The school operates a tiered level of support measures for families. From a universal and preventive approach for all pupils that can escalate to early help support within the school team and by local partners. If early-help is unsuccessful, or not engaged with, this will lead to targeted and legal intervention. See 5.3.

Preventative 100-97%	School and Trust policies and protocols. Clear high expectations are communicated effectively to children and parents/carers. The school operates a positive environment and engaging learning activities. We encourage a high level of parental and community engagement. Effective mentoring and pastoral support programs ensure children are happy and feel safe at the school. Team member training enables a whole-school approach to attendance improvement.

Emerging Risk 97-95%	Through analysis of risk factors and data trends, emerging concerns are proactively addressed. Family support is offered. Calls and informal meetings secure parent and pupil voices to identify barriers to attendance. Records of contacts completed by Year teams, Adjustments are considered and applied when required. Referral for multi-agency support is offered to families. Arising cases are discussed in team meetings.
Vulnerable 94-91%	The school will create a personalised attendance improvement plan (parental contract) if not already in place, that addresses the causes and symptoms of declining attendance. Formal meetings and letters will include target setting. A parenting contract will be considered alongside referrals to local authorities and outside services. Attendance tracking is put in place and a warning notice of Fixed Penalties issued. Cases are regularly monitored in weekly safeguarding triangulation meetings.
Legal Intervention 90% and below	When previous interventions have been unsuccessful, a referral to the Local Authority education service will be required. This could lead to legal intervention. The designated safeguarding lead will work with the attendance team members to assess risk of educational neglect. Case evaluations may lead to a referral into Children's Social Care.

7.4 **Monitoring and Analysing Attendance**

The school team will:

- Monitor individual attendance and absence data weekly and bi-weekly. Using our trust attendance tracker templates to identify opportunities to implement early interventions.
- Identify through data analysis, any groups of pupils' whose absences may be a cause for concern. e.g. SEND, EHCP, Pupil Premium, Children in care, Children with a social worker, Young Carers, etc .
- Meet weekly to discuss and agree actions for pupils at risk of persistent absenteeism.
- Meet weekly with (the) safeguarding team to review cases and agree action for pupils who are persistently or severely absent.
- Regularly report attendance data and impact of interventions to the local governing board

Attendance data is collected 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 school community.

7.5 **Using Data to Improve Attendance**

The attendance team will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to pastoral and school leaders, to facilitate proactive and supportive discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to identify, monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- Provide regular updates on attendance improvement data with parents.

7.6 **Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously impact their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

- Attendance of 950% equates to approximately 19 days of absence 95 missed lessons

- Attendance of 8% equates to approximately 29 days of absence 6 weeks of missed learning- 145 missed lessons
- Attendance of 80% equates to approximately 38 days of absence, 8 weeks of missed learning - 190 missed lessons
- Attendance of 75% equates to approximately 57 days of absence, 11.5 weeks of missed learning 285 lessons missed
- Attendance of 50% or less is considered 'severely absent'. Referral to children services.

To reduce the impact of persistent and severe absenteeism the school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Prioritise intensive support to overcome barriers in attendance.
- 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.
- Complete an Attendance Improvement Agreement or Parental Contract/Notice to Improve (10 absences within a 10 week period) with the family. This will include an action plan , parent and pupil voice, target setting and details of any reasonable adjustments.
- Facilitate access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

7.7 **Mental and Physical Health Conditions**

The school will work with families to assess and implement any necessary reasonable adjustments for pupils who experience challenges that have a substantial and/or long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out regular daily activities.

Reasonable adjustments may include changes to the physical environment, curriculum or the way information is presented, as well as providing additional equipment, or tailored services.

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education that is suitable to (for) their age and ability. If the school is unable to provide a pupil with full-time education due to their individual needs, we will work with the pupil, family, and other agencies to create an arrangement that is in the best interests of the pupil.

We will work in partnership with local medical and mental health services to ensure consistency of approach. When a pupil has an identified medical condition, it may be necessary to create an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) to support them at school. IHCPs are developed in partnership between the school, parents, pupils, and any relevant healthcare professionals who can advise on the child's case. The IHCP enables the school to effectively keep pupils safe, well and involved at school by providing clear information on what needs to be done when, and by whom.

8. Safeguarding and Attendance

8.1 **Safeguarding**

The school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of its standard procedures. However, it is recognised that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, Local Authority Procedures and the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding and welfare cases to Children's Social Care. The school has a duty to inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when they cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare.

The school will regularly liaise with providers of Alternative Provision (AP) to ensure that attendance records are accurately maintained and any absences and/or safeguarding concerns are effectively shared. We will coordinate any required follow up actions in conjunction with the AP. All AP providers agree to implement our school child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.

We recognise that safeguarding is not a discrete area of work: there is a safeguarding dimension to almost every area of school practice. As part of our whole school approach, and to ensure a holistic view of all children, we have structures and systems in place, such as scheduled meetings

and shared databases, to ensure that the DSL and wider safeguarding team has oversight of areas of school organisation which may not fall directly within their remit, but may impact upon effective safeguarding. These areas include behaviour, attendance, medical needs/first aid, SEND and bullying. Information from these areas will be factored into safeguarding decision making for individual children so that their needs are considered holistically.

8.2 **Welfare and Outreach Visits**

If a pupil does not attend the school regularly, team members may make welfare visits to the pupil's (their) home to see and speak to the pupil and parents/carers as part of the school's safeguarding and attendance processes. If team members are unable to see and speak to the pupil and parents/carers, they may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family, who they reasonably expect may be able to provide the school with relevant information.

Welfare visits do not need to be agreed or prearranged and can be at any point during school hours by any members of the school team.

The school will offer outreach visits at the family home if an attendance meeting at the school cannot be facilitated. The rationale and purpose for an outreach visit will be clearly communicated in advance with pupils and parents.

Details of welfare and outreach visits are recorded on a pupil's child protection file. All welfare and outreach visits will be subject to a regularly reviewed Risk Assessment.

8.3 **Children Missing Education**

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and Local Authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from the school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the Local Authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

We will notify the Local Authority when we are removing a pupils' name from the school admission register. We will also notify Children's Social Care if we have any safeguarding

concerns.

8.4 **Leaving The Sittingbourne School**

We are always sad to say goodbye to our students. If a student is leaving The Sittingbourne School because they are relocating or they are changing schools, Please inform us.
We need the student's new address and the details of the new school, including school name, address and start date.
This safeguarding procedure means that we know the student is still in education, safe and well.
If a parent/carer decides to Electively Home Educate their child, it is essential that you inform us in writing including the correct terminology from the DFE guidance. This can be via an email to tss-headteacher@swale.at

9. Policy Review

9.1 This policy and the procedures will be reviewed every academic year. All other linked policies will be reviewed in line with that policy review cycle.

9.2 The Attendance Lead/Champion will ensure that team members are made aware of any amendments to policies and procedures during the academic year.

9.3 **Policies and Procedures**

- Trust First Aid and Medical Policy
- Trust Complaints policy and procedure
- Trust Equality Objectives
- Trust Health and Safety Policy and other linked policies and risk assessments
- Trust ICT Acceptable Use Policy (staff and pupils)
- Trust Offsite Activities Policy
- Trust Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Trust Staff Code of Conduct
- Trust Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Trust Attendance Management Guide
- school Preventing Bullying policy
- school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- school Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing from Education Procedures

Appendix 1: DfE Attendance and Absence Codes

Summary of Attendance Codes and Meanings

In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 a pupil should be recorded as present or absent in the Attendance Register

On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non –compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admissions register at the time (exception boarder)

Full information contained in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the Statutory Attendance Guidance Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024

1. **If a pupil is present in school the following codes from table 1 should be used**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
/	Present at school AM	Must be in school at registration	Attending (Present)
****	Present at school PM	Must be in school at registration	Attending (Present)
L	Late arrival before register is closed	The pupil was absent when the register started being taken but arrived before the register was closed.	Attending (present)

2. **If a pupil is absent from school so that they can attend a place other than school for any of the following reasons the relevant code from table 2 should be used.**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
K	Attending Education provision arranged the LA	The nature of the provision must also be recorded. Code K can only be used if the child is present at the provision.	Attending an approved educational activity (present)
V	Attending an Educational visit or trip	The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for an educational visit or trip Arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff. The visit or trip must take place during the session for which it is recorded.	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

		Code V can only be used if the pupil is present at the visit.	

P	Participating in a Sporting Activity P code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity	P code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity The sporting activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded. The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has been arranged for the pupil by a local authority under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996 or sections 42(2) or 61(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014; ● the activity is of an educational nature; ● the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place for the activity; and ● the activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved.	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

W	Attending Work Experience	W code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity Under arrangements by school or LA In session for which it is recorded The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has been arranged for the pupil by a local authority under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996 or sections 42(2) or 61(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014; ● the activity is of an educational nature; ● the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place for the activity; and ● the activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved.	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

B	Attending any other approved Educational Activity	B code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity Under arrangements by school or LA In session for which it is recorded The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has been arranged for the pupil by a local authority under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996 or sections 42(2) or 61(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014; ● the activity is of an educational nature; ● the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place for the activity; and ● The activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved. As set out in the DfE's guidance on 'Providing remote education'. pupils who are absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor pupil's engagement with remote education, but this is not formally tracked in the attendance register	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

D	Dual Registered at another school	The school at which the pupil is scheduled to attend must record the pupil's attendance and absence with the relevant code. Code D may only be used by either school for a session where the pupil is scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexpected and unexplained absences are promptly followed u	Not a possible attendance (neither present or absent)

3. **If a pupil is absent with leave (NB schools not required to follow regulation 11 in granting a leave of absence should still use the relevant code)**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
C1	Leave of absence – performance or regulated employment abroad	Performance licence issued by LA or Body of Persons Approval issued by LA or Justice of peace has given licence for pupil to go abroad for performance or regulated purpose	Authorised absence
M	Leave of absence for Medical or dental Appointment	Agreement in advance Application by parent child normally lives with Minimum time necessary Where pupil is absent at registration	Authorised absence

J1	Leave of absence for Interview	Agreement in Advance Application by parent child normally lives with In session absence recorded	Authorised absence
S	Leave of absence for Studying for public examination		Authorised absence
X	Non – Compulsory School age pupil not required to attend school	For part time attendance Absence for timetabled sessions to use appropriate code and not X	Not a possible attendance (neither present or absent)
C2	Leave of absence – compulsory school age pupil subject to part time timetable	Exceptional circumstances If the school and a parent who the pupil normally lives with have agreed that, exceptionally, the pupil should temporarily be educated only part-time Temporary See Working Together to improve attendance	Authorised Absence
C	Leave of absence exceptional circumstances	Exceptional circumstances No blanket approach School discretion Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.	Authorised absence

4. **Pupil Absent other Authorised reasons**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes.	The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England, it is expected that the pupil should attend a school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at that school and their main school.	Authorised absence
R	Religious Observance	The pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to (not the parents themselves)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical appointment)	The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness.	Authorised Absence
E	Suspended or Permanently excluded with no alternative provision made	The pupil is suspended from school or permanently excluded from school, but their name is still entered in the admission register, and no alternative provision has been made for the pupil to continue their education	Authorised Absence

5. **Pupil Absent – Unavoidable Cause**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
Q	Unable to attend school because of lack of access arrangements	There is a lack of access arrangements for a pupil whose home is in England if— (a) a local authority have a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the pupil under section 508B(1) of the 1996 Act(13) for the purpose of facilitating the pupil's attendance at the school and have failed to discharge that duty; (b) a local authority have a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the pupil because of section 508E(2)(c) of the 1996 Act(14) for the purpose of facilitating the pupil's attendance at the school and have failed to discharge that duty; or (c) the school is an independent school that is not a qualifying school and— (i) the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home; (ii) no suitable arrangements have been made by a local authority for boarding accommodation for the pupil at or near the school; and (iii) no suitable arrangements have been made by a local authority for enabling the pupil to become a registered pupil at a qualifying school nearer to their home.	**Not a possible attendance**
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not been available	The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available	**Not a possible attendance**
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption	The pupil is unable to attend the school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency	**Not a possible attendance**
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those that the school considers cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use.	**Not a possible attendance**

Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Where a school was planned to be open for a session, but the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather), the attendance register is not taken as usual because there is no school session. Instead, every pupil listed in the admission register at the time must be marked with code Y4 to record the fact that the school is closed.	**Not a possible attendance**
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	The pupil is unable to attend the school because they are: ● in police detention, ● remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or ● detained under a sentence of detention. A pupil's absence should be recorded under code Y7 (Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause) if they are unable to attend because they are serving a community based (i.e. non-detained) part of a sentence of detention, referral order, or youth rehabilitation order that requires them to be absent during the school day	**Not a possible attendance**
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be: ● contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (or the equivalent in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), or • prohibited by any legislation relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	**Not a possible attendance**
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	This code should be used only where something in the nature of an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending the session in question. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent. The fact that a parent has done all they can to secure the attendance of the pupil at school does not, in itself, mean the pupil has been prevented by unavoidable cause. Schools must also record the nature of the unavoidable cause (regulation 10(6))	**Not a possible attendance**

6. **Absent for unauthorised reasons**

Code	Meaning	Criteria	Statistical Value
G	Holiday not granted by school	The school has not granted a leave of absence and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday. A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.	**Unauthorised absence**
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Where absence is recorded as code N (reason not yet established) in the attendance register, the correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session (regulation 10(7) to (9)). Code N must not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, schools must amend the pupil's record to Code O	**Unauthorised absence**
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Where no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given is one that would be recorded using one of the codes statistically classified as authorised.	**Unauthorised absence**
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Where a pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session. Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. All schools are expected to set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. This should be the same for every session and not longer than 30 minutes	**Unauthorised absence**

Administrative Codes

Code	Meaning	Statistical Value
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	**NOT COLLECTED**
#	Planned whole school closure	**NOT COLLECTED**