

## Attendance Policy

Prepared By: Ruth Davies – Attendance Lead

Approved By: SHS FGB

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## Attendance Policy

Attendance Champion: Mrs Nell Giles (Headteacher)

Attendance Officers: Mr Joe Connelly

**School opens: 9:00am**

Registration begins: 9:00am

Present mark given until: 9:20am

Late mark given between: 9:20 – 9:30am

U code, applied after: 9:30am

**School closes: 3:30pm**

## How to report when your child is absent

### First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

- Contact the school office, or your child's teacher, as soon as possible on the first day of absence by 9:00am where possible.
- If contact is not made by the parent/carer, then the school will phone, email and/or text the contacts listed for the child to endeavor to make contact.
- If your child is an inpatient in hospital, then the school will also contact the child's relevant health staff.
- If we are unable to make contact or ascertain sufficient reason for absence, a member of staff may make a home visit.
- If your child is an inpatient in hospital, then the school will also attempt to visit your child at bedside.
- Where appropriate, records of the above will be made available to social care in the event of any Missing in Education investigation.

If your child is absent, we will:

Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are unable to reach you and do not hear from you by 10am, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised and where appropriate we will:

- Invite you into the school to discuss the situation with the headteacher and school attendance officer, if absences persist.
- Follow all DfE guidance and our graduated response if absence is unauthorized and attendance falls below 90%.
- Liaise with health professionals to agree the level of school attendance that can be reasonable expected, in line with your child's health needs.



Please note after three days of absence, if your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as per the DfE guidance [Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101421/stat-guidance-template). We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and/or wider family.

## 1. Statement of Intent

We recognise that good attendance (above 96%) is key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason, the school will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance data and take action when attendance falls below the expected level. Good attendance impacts significantly on progress, learning, friendship groups and the child's overall happiness at school.

### Good attendance is important because:

- regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education and training.

We understand that there are many reasons why children may be absent or late for school. Please speak to staff about ways that we can support you with this.

We understand that pupils at Southampton Hospital School face greater barriers to attendance than their peers due to the high likelihood that they are suffering from long term medical conditions and/or have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same. However, due to the high level of need of many of our pupils, we remain mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access education during their hospital admission or referral to our outreach service. We understand that good school attendance is a protective factor for many vulnerable pupils and so we aim to support and build attendance both with us and back within their own schools

At Southampton Hospital School, it is our duty to consistently strive for the highest possible attendance for all our pupils. With understanding and compassion, aware of our pupils' health needs, we will ensure that every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

### Legal framework/ responsibilities

This policy adheres to Department of Education guidance found here [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101421/stat-guidance-template). Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education as stated here [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101421/stat-guidance-template)



Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take problems seriously which may lead to non-attendance.

Penalty Notices may be used under the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at school. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the Attendance Officer at the school or the Local Authority. For more information please see [School attendance and support \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/school-attendance-and-support). If your child usually attends a school in another local authority you will need to check the relevant information on that local authority's website or contact your child's usual school.

At Southampton Hospital School many of our pupils are dual registered with other schools. Where this is the case it is often most appropriate for the child's usual school to lead referrals to educational support services including issuing Penalty Notices. Where appropriate, SHS will always support this process, including providing liaison and data on attendance and absence concerns.

Unauthorised absence of more than 10 sessions (a session being one morning or one afternoon) in a ten-week period can result in a penalty notice. A penalty notice can be issued per parent for each child that is absent. Only two penalty notices will be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year period. Following this the Local Authority can consider instigating Court Proceedings via the Single Justice Procedure. Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

We will work together to help every pupil's attendance improve. Pastoral workers, the Pupil Premium Lead and the SENDCo may be involved in supporting attendance improvement for the cohorts that need the most support.

### Responsibilities of staff

Staff will:

- Promote and reward good and improving attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance staff on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.



- Warmly welcome and support pupils to reengage with learning on their return.
- Work with parents and local authorities to remove barriers to attendance.

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school 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.

#### **Parents/Carers will:**

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher or attendance staff any planned absences
- Discuss with the class teacher or attendance staff if they need any support to help their child to attend.
- Support the school with their aim to improve attendance
- Avoid taking their children out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence in very exceptional circumstances.

#### **Local Authority will:**

- Have a strategy to improve attendance for their whole area.
- Have an Attendance Support Team to work with all schools in the area.
- Provide a named point of contact.
- Provide opportunities for sharing effective practice.
- Hold termly conversations with every school around attendance.
- Work jointly with schools and relevant agencies to facilitate support for families and remove barriers to attendance particularly for those pupils who are missing out on education.

### **3. Rewarding Good and Improving Attendance**

We will recognise the effort that families make to get pupils into school each day by rewarding good and improving attendance at every opportunity. We uphold the highest aspirations for all our pupils and will celebrate the effort of every child to improve their attendance as far as they are able. Improving attendance may be celebrated within class, in weekly whole-school tutor time, on a 1:1 basis, or through a postcard from SLT sent home to highlight outstanding effort.

Every member of staff at SHS will work to improve the attendance of our pupils as far as their medical needs allow, as led by the formal assessment and guidance provided by health staff. As is most appropriate for our setting, we do not celebrate individual milestones as attendance percentages, or competitively compare cohorts/classes across the school.

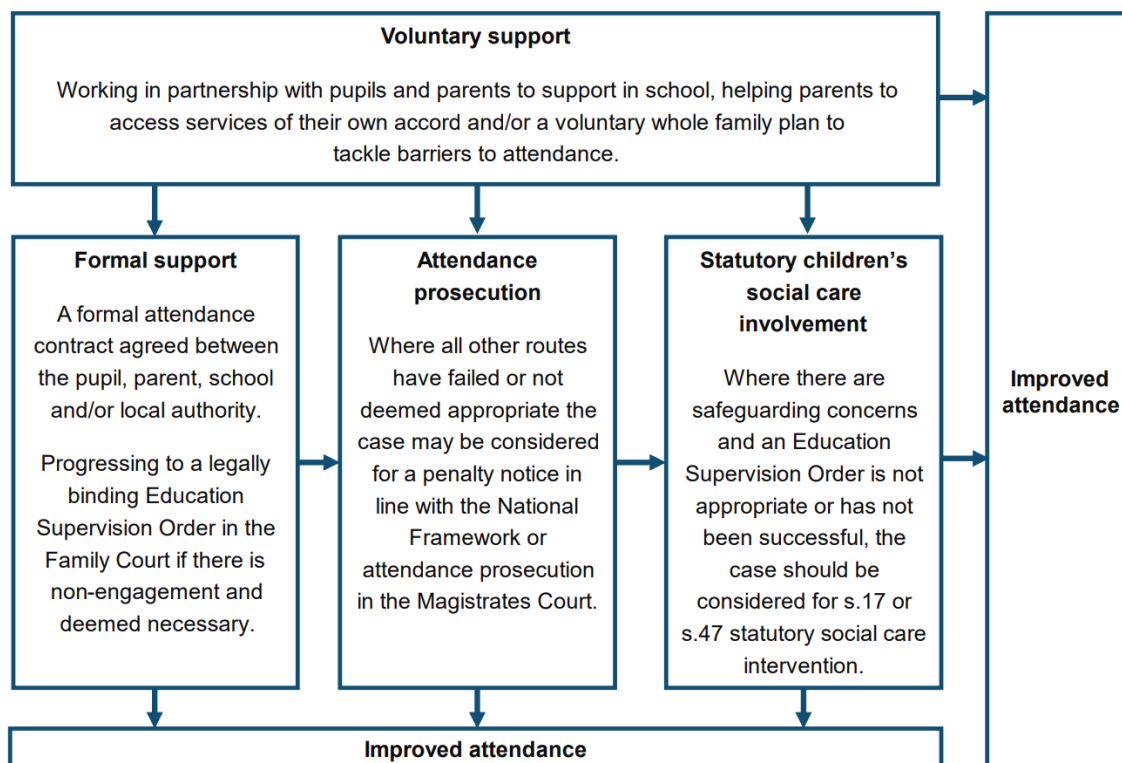
We do celebrate the resilience of our pupils and every effort they make to increase their attendance and punctuality.



## School Strategies to Improve and Support attendance

The school will follow the DfE guidance below outlined in [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

### Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



### Interventions for poor and declining attendance

Southampton Hospital School recognises that in order to provide consistent and fair intervention where attendance is a concern, universal metrics such as percentage of attendance are often necessary. There are particular percentage milestones, provided by the DfE, that help to indicate the severity of concern regarding attendance. These are:

- 100%: Excellent Attendance**
- 99.9% - 96%: Good Attendance**
- 95.9% - 91%: Cause for Concern**
- Less than 90%: Serious Concern**
- Less than 50%: Severe Absence**

We remind parents and pupils that any unauthorised absence is always a concern. SHS will always consider the impact of medical needs on school attendance, as defined by medical professionals, before deciding on the most appropriate course of intervention.





As part of the DfE's framework to consistently address attendance across the county, attendance below 90%, and then below 50% requires specific action.

**Below 90% attendance:** Your child is considered a **Persistent Absentee** and attendance is a serious concern. If your child misses 10% (three weeks/30sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. With due regard for your child's medical needs, we may put in place specific strategies of support where we are concerned that your child's attendance has fallen below 90%.

**Below 50% attendance:** Your child is considered a **Severe Absentee** and may be subject to intervention from the Local Authority, legal interventions, statutory action including fixed term penalties, court proceedings and possible referral to other outside agencies for a supported return. With due regard for your child's medical needs, we may escalate the strategies of support in place including making referrals to external agencies and holding multi-disciplinary team meetings with health professionals to formally agree on the degree to which school attendance is prevented by a medical need.

### Absence Due to Illness

Southampton Hospital School recognises that the underlying health conditions of pupils may necessitate absence from our school. Illness absence can also include pupils who become more unwell whilst in hospital, leading health professionals to advise that school attendance is not currently possible. These situations are always reviewed daily, to minimise the time spent out of school.

As a hospital school, many pupils will be able to access an adjusted form of schooling despite being unwell e.g. pupils may be too unwell to attend a classroom and so will be educated at bedside.

For all our pupils, absence due to illness that relates to a known medical condition will be authorised providing health professionals agree that the absence is due to that medical condition. Where illness absence is reported that does not relate to a known medical condition, further evidence may be required from parents/carers or health professionals to inform provision and help secure future attendance.

Absences due to parents/carers health or medical procedures will not be authorised as standard.

If your child is unwell and you are unsure of whether to send them in to school a useful site to check is <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

### Request for leave of absence

**The DfE states: 'Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.'**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances only and this is not the norm. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether the absence is authorised at all.





The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable circumstances (which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time). Circumstances will vary from family to family.

There is no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and, in the vast majority of cases, holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for a leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available on request from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will automatically be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent exceeds 10 sessions, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a fine or a warning letter.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and as such, we expect parents to help us by not arranging holidays during school time. Unauthorised absence of more than 10 sessions (a session being one morning or afternoon) in a ten-week period can be issued with a penalty notice.

School work for pupils that are absent will only be provided during exclusions or long-term medical absences and not during unauthorised absences.

### **Religious Observance**

We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs.

The absence will be authorised. We ask that the parents/carers notify the school in advance.

## **4. How We Can Support Our Children to Attend**

### **Strategies employed by the school.**

#### **The school will:**

- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- Provide additional support for those families and pupils that need it most.
- Make sure attendance improvement is approached as a whole staff team.
- Provide an attendance policy that outlines clear process for reporting and recording absence.
- Record registers accurately.
- Monitor attendance data to enable early intervention where needed.
- Treat absence as a safeguarding concern where necessary.
- Provide a physical environment that is warm, safe and meets need.
- Provide an enticing curriculum
- Establish strong communication channels with parents, varying methods according to need.



### **My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best dealt with between the school, the parents and the child.

If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to enable them to stay away from school. This may give the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Please do contact your child's class teacher, pastoral worker or attendance staff as soon as possible to openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons such as difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems, family difficulties, special educational needs or bullying issues. It is important that we communicate effectively to identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional and we may be able to make referrals or signpost you towards further assistance.

At Southampton Hospital School, we are also aware that your child may feel reluctant to attending a brand new school while in hospital. We know that any stay in hospital, or spell of serious illness, can result in periods of absence from school, creating significant school related anxiety and sporadic attendance. We will work with you and your child to support them during this time.

### **What can parents do to encourage their child to attend school?**

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that they have the correct clothes and are properly equipped. (contact the school if you require assistance with this)
- Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.
- Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, their progress towards rewards, their friendships, and even what they had for lunch!
- Speak positively about school at home.

For many parents, a child starting school may be their / your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first but thinking and speaking of it as a new and exciting adventure will help you both. The transition into a settled and happy school life also depends on routine and regular, punctual attendance can help as much as any other intervention.

### **Record preservation**


School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

### **Criteria for success**

- Improved attendance data across all areas of the school
- Unauthorised absence and persistent absence rate decreases
- Improvement in individuals' attendance
- The profile of good attendance within the school community is raised



## APPENDIX 1– Southampton Fixed Penalty Notice Guidance


(Insert School Logo)

## School Absence Penalty Notices 2024/2025- A Parent's Guide

With the introduction of the new Department of Education National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into effect for all Penalty Notices issued due to unauthorised absence that has taken place after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

When will Penalty Notices be issued?	Who will Penalty Notice be issued to?	How will Penalty Notices be issued?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penalty Notices can be issued when a statutory school-aged child has had 10 sessions (5 school days) or more of unauthorised absence within a 10 school week period.</li> <li>• Only two penalty notices will be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3 year period. Also see below.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each absent child.</li> <li>• For example, for a family of four, the mother would receive 2 penalty notices (1 for each child) and the father would receive 2 penalty notices (1 for each child), totalling 4 penalty notices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All schools in Southampton City Council's area can request the Council to issue penalty notices. If the school's request meets the criteria for issue, the penalty notice/s will be issued with a accompanying letter.</li> <li>• The penalty notices and accompanying letters are sent via first class post to the recorded home address of each parent.</li> </ul>

First Offence/  
First Penalty  
Notice

- The First Offence/ First Penalty Notice issued for 10 or more sessions for unauthorised absence within 10 school week period will be payable within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is paid on or before the 21st day of payment, the amount due is £80 per parent per child.
- If the Penalty Notice is paid between the 21st day and the 28th day of payment, the amount due is £160 per parent per child.

Second Offence/  
Final Penalty  
Notice within 3  
years

- The Second Offence/ Final Penalty Notice issued for 10 or more sessions for unauthorised absence within 10 school week period for the same child and same parent will be payable within 28 days.
- The amount payable is £160 per parent per child.
- There is no option to pay this Penalty Notice earlier at a reduced rate.

Third  
(and any further  
offences within  
3 years)

- The Third Offence of 10 or more sessions for unauthorised absence within 10 school week period for the same child and same parent will instigate Court Proceedings via the Single Justice Procedure.
- The Council can use its discretion to instigate other alternative actions such as an Education Welfare Officer becoming involved.

Further information can be found on the school website ([add link](#)) and on Southampton City Council's website, under [School attendance and support \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#).

## APPENDIX 2 – Process for Leavers

If your child is not on roll at any other school, and is leaving our school (other than through a planned discharge from hospital) parents are asked to give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave our setting without being enrolled at another school, and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'.

This requires schools and Local Authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

- Parent/Guardian is required to notify the Headteacher in writing, giving the leaving date, new address and phone numbers and detailed reasons.
- Parent/Guardian to complete the Southampton City Council in year transfer application [In-year transfer \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/in-year-transfer)
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) need to ensure that they have cleared all payments on the Parent Pay system.
- The school will contact the child's new setting on the date stated they will start to confirm that this transfer has taken place.



### **APPENDIX 3 – Possible Exceptions to Unauthorised Absence**

#### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work and modelling.**

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence approved by the Headteacher as being part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as an authorised absence.

#### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level in sport.**

Parents/carers of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this. They will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

#### **Service Families**

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) issue additional guidance to schools with regards to term time absences for the children of service families. This is provided because it is acknowledged that the operational needs of the Armed Forces may legitimately prevent a service family from taking holidays within the school holidays. Ultimately the decision on whether to authorise leave in term time still lies with the Headteacher, however further clarification regarding the exact circumstances may be sought from Unit Commanding Officers and their welfare staff. When deciding whether to authorise an application for a leave of absence from a service family, the Headteacher will take into account the circumstances, the child's attendance record and the school year which the child is in.

#### **Gypsy Roma and Traveller families**

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

