Southam College

Attendance Policy

2025/26

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1. Policy statement

Philosophy

School attendance is not merely a requirement but a fundamental pillar of education. It plays a pivotal role in shaping academic success, personal growth, and future prospects, making it an indispensable aspect of any educational system. Regular attendance to school can have a significant impact on children's lives and Southam College is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. It is the policy of our school to celebrate both.

Southam College is proudly associated as being an Inclusive Attendance school. Our unwavering commitment to attendance centres around child-centric actions, evidence-informed practices, and a shared understanding of everyone's roles and collective responsibilities to promote exceptional attendance.

Objectives;

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, students and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.

- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

    - Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs/or disabilities and provide them with additional support

2. Definitions

In this policy there are some key definitions which will be used, we have referenced the meaning of these terms below for ease of understanding:

Persistent Absence - Where a student's attendance figure reaches 90% or below, they are deemed as 'persistently absent' from school.

Severe Absence - Where a student is absent from school more than they are present, therefore with an attendance figure of 50% or below, they are deemed as 'severely absent'.

Parents - For the purpose of this policy a parent means; All natural parents, whether they are married or not, any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Vulnerable students - For the purpose of this policy vulnerable students are those who;

Have a social worker or previously had a social worker;

Is a Child looked after;

Are Children with an Educational health care plan;

Are Children who are severely absent (their attendance in school is 50% or below).

3. Statutory/Legal Guidance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school[1].

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations in 2013 only allowing Head Teachers to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances. Holiday requests will not be granted.** Please see further details on page 12-13.

[1] The education Act 1996, part 1, section 7. Additional legal requirements may be found in *The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006*.

There are many factors which can impact on a child attending school:

Health Issues: Children may experience physical or mental health issues that lead to absences. Chronic illnesses, infections, and mental health conditions can impact a student's ability to attend school regularly.

Family Circumstances: Family-related factors such as bereavement, family illness, or caring responsibilities can result in absences from school. In some cases, students may need to take time off to support their families.

Bullying and Safety Concerns: Experiences of bullying, harassment, or safety concerns at school can deter students from attending. They may fear for their safety or well-being, leading to increased absenteeism.

Transportation Issues: Difficulty in accessing transportation to school, especially in rural areas, can affect attendance. Lack of reliable transportation options can lead to sporadic attendance.

Socioeconomic Factors: Families facing financial difficulties may struggle to provide necessary resources for their children to attend school regularly. Issues such as lack of appropriate clothing, food, or a stable home environment can contribute to absenteeism.

Special Educational Needs (SEN): Students with special educational needs may require additional support and accommodations to attend school regularly.

Engagement and Motivation: Lack of engagement with school activities and a perceived lack of relevance in the curriculum can lead to disinterest in attending. Children who are not motivated may avoid attending school.

Academic Challenges: Students facing academic difficulties or feeling overwhelmed by coursework may avoid school. They may fear falling behind or failing in their studies.

Cultural and Language Barriers: Children from diverse backgrounds may face challenges related to language barriers or cultural differences. These challenges can affect their attendance and engagement with school.

Peer Pressure and Social Factors: Influence from peers can impact attendance. Children may avoid attending school to align with the behaviour of their peers or to engage in social activities outside of school.

Parental Involvement: Parental support and involvement in a child's education can positively influence attendance. Lack of parental engagement may lead to increased absenteeism.

If any of these are areas of concern, please use the following contact details to work with the school in supporting this:

4. Key Staff and Contacts

School-based contacts

Role	Contact Details
Headteacher	Mel Mason
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Megan Browne
Attendance Champion (Senior Leader)	John Miller
Attendance Manager	Elizabeth Kelland
School Absence reporting line	Kathryne Wincote
Nominated Attendance link Governor	
All of the above can be contacted via the School office on 01926 812 560	

Other useful contacts

Agency / Contact	Contact Details
Ranjit Samra-CEO Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Ranjit.Samra@stowevalley.com
Samantha Godfrey-Director of Safeguarding Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Godfrey.s@stowevalley.com
Warwickshire Attendance Service	01926 476600
Access to Education team	01926 736323
Children's Social Care – Family Connect Warwickshire County Council	01926 414144

4.1 Responsibilities

The Local Governing Board and Trust Board take an active role in attendance improvement by:

● Supporting the school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.

●Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

●Ensuring school staff receive training on school attendance.

●Regularly reviewing attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the students who need it.

School Attendance Teams will:

●Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, students and parents understand.

●Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.

●Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.

●Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.

●Have a dedicated Senior Leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

●Proactively use data to identify students at risk of poor attendance.

●Work with each identified student and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.

●Signpost and support access to any required services where out of school barriers are identified.

●Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the Local Authority and other partners and where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the Local Authority and partners.

●Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers where absence becomes persistent.

●Hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future where there is a lack of engagement.

●Work with the Local Authority on legal intervention where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate.

●Intensify support through statutory children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

●Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

●Agree a joint approach for all severely absent students with the Local Authority.

●Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.

●Work with other schools in the local area and the Local Authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
●Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the student's EHCP is accessed.
●Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals for children with SEND and medical conditions.
●Regularly monitor data for children with SEND and medical conditions, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.
●Inform the student's social worker, where there us one, if there are any unexplained absences and if the child's name is to be deleted from the register. Parents/Families with parental responsibility have a legal obligation for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time.
●Parents/Families should support the school by avoiding non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during school time. Where this is not possible, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
●Parents/Families DO NOT have an automatic right to take their child out of the school for a holiday or any other period of extended leave during term time.
●Parents/Families should contact the school by 8.30am on each day their child is absent and where possible, indicate day of return. Parents/Families should respond promptly to absence texts received as this is a safeguarding concern and could trigger a home visit.
●Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.
●All unexplained absences will be investigated by the Attendance and Pastoral Teams and Parents/Families will be kept informed about any attendance concerns.
●Parents/Families should attend meetings about their child's attendance and support the school in responding to concerns regarding attendance.

Students will:
●Students are expected to arrive to school site no later than 8:45
●We ask that students are resilient and attend school regularly. Students should be aspirational and aim to achieve 0 Days off throughout the academic year. However, we recognise students will become unwell from time to time. Our school expectation is always no more than 3 days missed per school year.
●We encourage students to communicate with parents/families, Tutor, Head of House or a trusted adult if there is an issue that is making them not want to come to school so that the school can provide support and advice.
●Students are expected to remain in the school all day and will not be allowed to leave the school site without permission.
●Truancy from school is taken seriously and parents/families will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Recording Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department of Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

5. Safeguarding

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse, neglect and exploitation and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. As per Keeping children safe in Education 2025, children who are persistently absent from education or missing in education are more vulnerable to safeguarding concerns.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will always follow up with parents/carers when students are not at school. This means we need to have a least two up to date contact numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if their numbers change.

Southam College recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

Southam College will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school and evidence of absences may be requested, such as medical evidence where applicable

5.2 Children missing education and Children absent from education

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education leaders have ensured that:

1. Staff understand what to do when children do not attend regularly, causing the child to be 'absent from education'.
2. Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for students who go missing from education or are absent from education (especially on repeat occasions) are in place.

3. Staff know that travelling to conflict zones could be an indicator of FGM and forced marriage.
4. Procedures are in place to ensure that we always inform the local authority when we plan to take students off-roll or when they:
    a. leave the school to be home educated
    b. move away from the school location
    c. remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
    d. are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or are permanently excluded

We will ensure that students who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.

When a student leaves, we will record the name of the student's new School and their expected start date.

Staff will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the Local Authority, particularly where children are missing from education, are absent on repeated occasions and/or are absent for periods during the school day.

Southam College is required to inform the local authority where a pupil is absent for **10 days and the reasons are not known and/or coded as unauthorised** (G, N, O, and/or U). The school attendance team will work with the family as per the attendance road map and flowchart below.

5.3 Vulnerable Students

Southam College routinely monitors the attendance of vulnerable students. If we have concerns about students, we work closely with outside agencies to ensure parents understand the importance of good attendance and attendance procedures. There are a number of ways we may[2] monitor the attendance of vulnerable students in addition to the universal daily process of monitoring attendance for all;

a. Watch List - Vulnerable students are included on the school internal 'Watch List', the attendance of these students is monitored on a lesson-by-lesson basis and absences are reported to the appropriate staff member immediately and contact is made with parents/carers as needed.
b. Daily school contact from the attendance team to parents/carers (and any external professionals such as social workers) for absences of vulnerable students or those at risk of persistent or severe absence.
c. Dual Registration – Southam College maintains its responsibility to ensure that students who are dual registered are attending each day and progressing with their education.

[2] The way in which we monitor a vulnerable student will be on a case by case basis and these decisions are regularly reviewed between the attendance, safeguarding and pastoral teams in school.

d. SEND – Students who have special education needs or disabilities who are poor attenders are monitored through the internal referral and monitoring panel (RAMP). At regular meetings, attendance is discussed and tracked and interventions are put into place by senior leaders.
e. Severely Absent Students - Students who are severely absent are assigned an attendance case manager who makes regular contact with the child and family to support them in removing the barriers to attendance and engage them back in to school. All contact and agreed interventions are robustly recorded and the impact is monitored regularly.

6. Day to Day Attendance Procedures

6.1Registers

Registers are taken every lesson of the school day, within the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Non-attendance is identified each morning and afternoon as well as within every lesson.

In the morning if the child has not arrived in school and we have not been informed of a reason the following actions will be taken;

- A text message will be sent to the parent/carers

If no appropriate response is received

- A telephone call will be made on the second day of unexplained absence

If no appropriate response is received

- A home visit will be completed on the 3rd day of the unexplained absence.

The DSL notifies Children's Social Care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two consecutive days without explanation.

The school will continue to make all reasonable steps to see the absent child and gather a reasonable absence. This may include working with relevant external agencies in the best interest of the child.

6.2 Absence and Punctuality

Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible to inform us if a child is to be absent or late on **EACH** day that the child is eligible to attend.

This can be done via;

1. **Telephone** 01926 812 560 - press 1 for attendance
2. **Text** 01926 800044
3. **Email** souattendance@stowevalley.com
4. **App** ClassCharts

Students are late if they are not in their first session by 08:50

The attendance team and tutors will monitor lateness and punctuality. Punctuality is followed up using the following process:

Pupils sign in at the reception.

Pupils who arrive after 9:30 will receive a late after registration closes code (U).

Tutors and Heads of Year then discuss reasons for lateness with the pupils.

Where parents are phoning in daily to report student absence the school will follow an 'Explained absence process. At Southam College our explained absence process is:

Day 1-Message on classcharts and a resilience e-card sent home to parents

Day 2-Text message home to parents

Day 3-Physical postcard sent home to the student

Day 5-Phonecall to discuss ongoing absence with parents

Day 6-Home visit

An explanation from a student's parent does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If a student has an explained absence **from school for more than 5 consecutive days**, on the 6th day, the absence will automatically be unauthorised and the school will arrange a meeting that day (or as close as possible) with parents to discuss the reason for absence and support them in overcoming any barriers to attendance. A home visit may also be conducted on the 6th day of an explained absence in order to ensure our safeguarding duties are fulfilled. Where applicable medical evidence for an ongoing absence **may** be requested. Where there is long term explained absences the school will still continue to keep contact with the child through various means, such as home visits, online meetings or through an external professional. This will ensure the school can maintain their duty to safeguard and promote welfare of all children within the school and ensure the child has the relevant people working with them and the family.

7. Leave of Absence

- The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Expectations

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission for a Leave of Absence from a school may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an authorised person).

- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

- Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.

- When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify the parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.

- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.

- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

- Where applications for Leave of Absences are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an "unauthorised" absence. Where a leave of absence is requested but additional days take either prior to or after the request, they may be considered as part of the leave of absence.

- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.

- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings. A copy of which can be found at WCC FPN code of conduct

- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence from this date will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).

- First Leave of Absence Offence: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.

- Second Leave of Absence Offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.

- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice). A Penalty Notice will not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

8. Attendance Intervention

In line with the DfE statutory guidance we offer a supportive attendance process, which we also refer to as connection, based on a relational, needs led, stepped approach. Our school offers a welcoming ethos with high expectations for all. We will assess data to identify absence trends and use preventative meetings/discussions with families to listen, understand, support and remove barriers. Where needed we will formalise support to nurture improvement with

strategies such as attendance contracts. As a last resort we will consider intensifying support and/or enforce legal sanctions.

Please see below examples of our attendance roadmap and attendance support procedures.

NB: This roadmap and flowchart is a guide and each case will be assessed and reviewed depending on each students' individual needs and which interventions will be most effective in supporting them to improve or maintain positive attendance. Early intervention will be sought so students can be supported meeting their attendance targets. The nature of student absence is crucial when applying this approach and individual circumstances will be considered.

8.1 Attendance Incentives

Southam College promotes and incentivises good attendance on a continual cycle throughout the school year as we know it is vital to celebrate attendance on a regular basis. Examples of the way Southam College promotes good attendance includes:

-Messages to parents and students on the school website

-Praise postcards sent home for improved attendance

-Assemblies celebrating individual, tutor or year group attendance

-Prizes given to individuals, tutor groups or houses based on attendance. This is not based solely on the highest attendance, but may include the most improved attendance over a set period of time. Our key focus is on recognition of effort.

-Reward afternoons such as 'pizza party' or 'film afternoon'

-Stickers, stamps, postcards or other forms of recognition for excellent or improved attendance.