

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Version: 4.2
 Approved: 3 July 2019
 Reviewed: 6 July 2020¹
 Reviewed: 22 June 2021²
 Next review: June 2022
 Co-ordinator: Louise Mugford

Rationale

Promoting high levels of attendance and punctuality is seen as essential at Sandwich Technology School. Regular attendance at school is a major factor in students' learning and achievement and helps to prepare them for successful progression to higher study, training and employment.

Purpose

The aim of the school's Attendance Policy is to make clear the roles and responsibilities of students, parents and carers, school leaders and staff, in maximising school attendance and minimising absence. It explains the procedures for reporting and monitoring absence and investigating the causes of poor attendance. The policy sets out the actions that will be taken by the school and the Local Authority when there are concerns about a student's attendance.

Attendance and the law

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on parents³ to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Sandwich Technology School aims to ensure that parents fulfil this obligation as soon as their child starts school, setting out clear expectations and responsibilities in the 'Home-school Agreement', signed by the child, parents and the school.

Where problems do occur that affect a student's attendance, the school will work closely with students, parents and – where necessary – external agencies, to improve attendance so that students are able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them at Sandwich Technology School.

Attendance expectations

At Sandwich Technology School, students are expected to attend school daily unless there is an unavoidable reason not to do so. All students are expected to maintain attendance levels of at least 95 per cent:

- attendance of 97 per cent and above is considered good;
- attendance above 95 per cent is considered satisfactory;
- attendance of 90 per cent to 94.99 per cent is considered as requiring improvement;
- attendance of below 90 per cent is considered as persistent absenteeism.

Students whose attendance falls below 90 per cent or who have ten or more days of absence reported as illness or appointments, may be required to provide medical evidence to support all absences due to illness or appointments if no known medical conditions are evidenced or recorded.

¹ Reference added to 'Edulink' as a means of reporting absence.

² Paragraph added to explain how an absence linked to Covid-19 would be recorded.

³ Parental Responsibility is a legal term that means having all the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities for a child (a child is a person under the age of 18). Having Parental Responsibility for a child means that you are responsible for, and have the right to be consulted about, the child's health, education and welfare. For the purposes of school attendance, the local authority consider all adults who are named contacts on the school database with whom a child resides (both parents with Parental Responsibility and step-parents, grandparents or carers) as responsible for ensuring that the child(ren) attend school regularly, and will issue a Penalty Notice (PN) to all responsible adults - not just those with Parental Responsibility.

Types of absence

Students should only miss school as a result of illness or some other unavoidable reason. Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory reason for absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences; they are able to advise of the reasons for absence and provide evidence, but are not able to decide if an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Most absences for satisfactory reasons will be authorised by the school:

- illness;
- emergency dental or medical appointments (where possible these should be arranged for after school or during the school holidays; where this is unavoidable and students are required to attend during the school day, they are expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment has occurred);
- day of religious observance;
- exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement;
- an interview with a prospective employer or college.

Where reasons provided for non-attendance are not considered as valid or acceptable, this will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised; this can include where a student does not attend school either before or after a medical appointment, for example an orthodontist appointment, where a whole day absence is not necessary.

Not attending in circumstances relating to the coronavirus (Covid-19)

There are some circumstances in which pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus. If a pupil's travel to or attendance at school would be contrary to law or Government guidance relating to the incidence of, or transmission of, coronavirus, the pupil's non-attendance will not be counted as an absence. Parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school on the first day of absence.

If a pupil tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.

Implementing the policy

Support, advice and guidance

The school has a wide range of measures to help students who have genuine reasons for missing school. Staff will always seek to help families to overcome issues that may be affecting a student's attendance.

Safeguarding

All schools have a safeguarding duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, to investigate any unexplained absence. This is a duty that we take very seriously at Sandwich Technology School to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students. Therefore, unless we have received notification of a student's absence from a parent/carer on each morning of absence, we will make contact home on every day of absence.

Daily procedure for reporting absences

It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, providing a reason for absence and indicating when the student is expected to return. If a definite return date is not provided, then contact must be made on each day of absence to confirm the reason. If a student is repeatedly reported as absent due to illness and their attendance has fallen below 95 per cent, medical evidence will be requested to support all future absences. Failure to provide medical evidence will result in all absences being marked as unauthorised, which can result in a Penalty Notice being requested if ten or more school sessions (five school days) are missed within a fifty school day period (the absences do not have to be consecutive). Medical evidence must be provided for all medical appointments. A medical appointment card, reminder letter or a copy of a prescription showing the student's name and date of printing will suffice.

Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term. Parents need to contact the school on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of absence. This is usually by telephone, the 'Edulink' app or email.

When the student returns to school, if no reason has already been provided, students should bring a note from their parent explaining the absence. For absences of three consecutive school days or more, medical evidence will be required (appointment card, copy of a prescription, letter from the hospital etc.). A back-to-school interview with the student may be conducted upon their return. Work will not be sent home for students to complete during absence.

Medical appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure that appointments are made outside of school hours. Where this cannot be avoided, students are expected to attend for as much of the school day either side of their appointment as possible. Medical evidence must be provided for all medical appointments. A medical appointment card, reminder letter or a copy of a prescription showing the student's name and date of printing will suffice.

Religious observance

The school recognises that there are times where students of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends. Parents will be aware of these dates and should complete an absence form in advance so that authorised absence can be considered.

Procedure for dealing with unauthorised absence

Absence during term time including holidays

From 1 September 2013, changes to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 state that Headteachers are unable to agree leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for exceptional leave must be made in advance on an 'Absence Request Form for Exceptional Circumstances', which is available from the school website or Attendance Office. Sandwich Technology School does not authorise holidays during term time and will use Penalty Notices in line with the code of conduct set out by the Government.

Please note:

- when a leave of absence is not agreed and the student is out of school, the absence is recorded as unauthorised and the Headteacher may request that a Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority to each parent for each child;
- the fine associated with a Penalty Notice will be specified in the Headteacher's written response to the absence request;
- the Headteacher cannot grant retrospective approval for an absence;
- there is no right of appeal against the Headteacher's decision not to authorise an absence or the issuing of a Penalty Notice, because the authorisation of absence is the sole responsibility of the Headteacher;
- Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority not the school;
- where a Penalty Notice is unpaid, the Local Authority may consider taking legal action under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for failure to ensure a student's regular attendance at school; this will take place before magistrates who have the ability to issue the maximum fine of £1,000 per parent, per student for the offence.

Truancy

The school will investigate concerns where any students are discovered to be persistently truanting from school (or lessons when in school) and take disciplinary action as appropriate. Both the student and parents will be invited to discuss possible reasons and school support that could help. The school may take further statutory action, including a referral to the Local Authority to begin legal proceedings against parents.

Children Missing Education (CME)

If a student goes missing from school for an unknown reason for ten days, the school will follow the Local Authority guidance for 'Children Missing Education' and will report the student as missing to the Local Authority.

Punctuality and lateness

Students are expected to be on the school premises in time for their 08:40 morning registration. Students who arrive after tutor time has started at 08:40 are required to go to the Attendance Office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Students without a valid reason for being late will be given a sanction.

Persistent lateness will result in an attendance meeting, which can ultimately lead to a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

Deletions from attendance registers

Where a student has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days without authority and without reasonable grounds, and both the school and the Local Authority have failed to ascertain where the student is, consideration will be given to deleting the student's name from the school's admission and attendance register.

Useful information sources

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006- Statutory Instrument 2006 No 1751 (as amended 2010)
 - Keeping Pupil Registers: Guidance on Applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation (2008)
 - An Audit Tool for Registration Inspection
 - Absence and Attendance Codes Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities (2009)
 - TeacherNet - School Registers and the Regulations
 - Office of Public Sector Information
-

Links to other policies/documents

- Anti-bullying Policy
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Equality Policy
 - Home-school Agreement
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
 - Student Behaviour Management Policy
-