



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Principal: Mr E Hodges

Name of Governor approving this policy: Mr A Aggarwal

Attendance Manager: Mrs N O'Boyle

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This policy is based on the statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024

DFE Working together guidance from 19th August 2024:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

Parents guide:

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

Introduction

For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. All pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Regular school attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Students with the highest attainment have the highest attendance. For instance, at GCSE level, students who gain at least a grade 5 (strong pass) in Mathematics and English have an attendance rate of over 96%. Those who fail to secure a grade 5 have an average attendance rate of 91%.

We recognise that the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

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.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at our school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends 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 senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance (the Senior Attendance Champion) in school is the Deputy Principal.

In line with Medway Local Authority and national expectations, we are aiming for a minimum attendance rate of 97% for every pupil.

School Attendance and Lateness:

Pupils must arrive in their form room at 8.25am for registration. Form tutors will complete and send classroom registers at 8.30am to the Attendance Officer.

Pupils will be considered late if they arrive between 8.30am and 8.55am when registration closes. Form tutors will not record a late mark or minutes late between 8.25am– 8.30am.

If a student arrives in form/school after 8.30am they should go to reception to sign in on the late sheet. This will be coded L (absent when register opens at 8.25am but arrives before register closes at 8.55am). The late desk will record minutes late.

Pupils that arrive after 8.55am will be coded U (unauthorised absence) or another absence code that is more appropriate.

Registration closes at 8.55am.

Afternoon registration 2.10pm - 2.15pm

The school day ends at 3.10pm.

Parents should report their child's absence each day by either email to absence@sjwms.org.uk or via the My Child at School app.

If no contact is received to explain an absence, the school's Attendance Officers will follow up the absence and make contact with parents, emergency contacts or make home visits.

Parents who want attendance support should contact the relevant pastoral office (lowerschool@sjwms.org.uk; middleschool@sjwms.org.uk; sixthform@sjwms.org.uk) or the school office (office@sjwms.org.uk).

Attendance and Punctuality

Pupils are expected to be punctual at all times and to ensure that their attendance is registered.

Pupils are late if they arrive after 8.30am.

If a pupil is late it is their responsibility to report to the Reception Late Desk / Sixth Form Office to sign the late book.

Lateness to school will result in a B2L Detention. This will be for 15 minutes. Failure to attend this detention will result in an escalation to B2 (30 Minute detention).

Persistent lateness (more than twice per term) will be sanctioned by B2s.

We will endeavour to track traffic and weather conditions daily. Parents should email into the school by 9am to notify and give reasons to the school of late attendance. We will take this information into consideration when issuing detentions. It will be the decision of the school to issue a detention. Parents and students will be notified.

Attendance, Mental Health, SEN and reasonable adjustments

Some children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods.

It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly, and we will support them in doing so.

In many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

We will facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue. We will consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability.

The school will operate according to its statutory duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and relevant DFE guidance. We will refer to the Local Authority regarding alternative provision where a student cannot attend school full-time for 15 days or more, consecutive or otherwise, due to a physical or mental health need and cannot access full-time education.

Authorised absence

If a pupil is absent through illness, authorisation can be given following the pupil's return to school. Authorisation for all other absences will only be given if the application for Leave of Absence is made two weeks in advance of the proposed date of absence. All applications will need to be made in writing and, if authorised, the pupil will be issued with a "pupil pass".

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad; Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment; Study leave for public examinations; A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable; Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion.

Leave of Absence for a funeral will normally be authorised, because it qualifies as an 'exceptional circumstance', providing the request is made at least 3 days in advance of the proposed date of absence (in contrast with the 2 weeks for other absence requests). All applications will need to be made in writing. We will normally authorise 1 day for funerals that take place locally within Medway, Kent or adjoining local authority areas. Funerals that are not local or that are taking place abroad will be considered on a case by case basis.

Medical/dental appointments

As far as possible medical appointments should be made outside school hours.

Leave of Absence for medical, dental appointments, etc. will normally be authorised, providing the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides makes a request in writing prior to the appointment and provides medical evidence of that appointment.

Medical appointments do not necessitate a full day of absence unless substantial travel is required. Proof of time and place of appointment may be requested.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity

Medical evidence

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will be evident and can be accepted without question or concern. Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness will medical evidence be requested to support the absence and when attendance is a cause for concern, evidence will also be requested to authorise absence/s.

Medical evidence will be requested by the Attendance Team as proof of absence. Medical evidence may be in the form of an appointment card, copy of a prescription note or prescribed medication sticker on packaging. Pharmacy medications with a dated receipt may be accepted on a limited time basis. (3 days).

Unauthorised Absence

Absence from school can only be authorised by the School; any absences not authorised by the School will, therefore, be deemed unauthorised.

Parents/carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Principal can do this. However, parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the School to consider.

Use of attendance and absence codes:

On each occasion the register is taken, the appropriate national attendance and absence code will be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time.

The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CODES 2025-2026

Present Codes

/ \ present during registration

B educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes

K attending provision arranged by the local authority

L arrived after the register has started but before it has closed

P Sporting activity with prior agreement from school

V educational visit or trip

W work experience

Absent Codes

Authorised Absences

C exceptional circumstances

C1 in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad

C2 absent due to part-time timetable

D dual registered

E suspended or permanently excluded

I illness (not medical or dental appointments)

J1 job/school/college interview

M medical or dental appointment

Q unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements

R religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)

S study leave

T parent travelling for occupational purposes

X non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Y1 unable to attend due to transport provided not being available

Y2 unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption

Y3 unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 unable to attend due to whole school closure

Y5 unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6 unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Y7 unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)

Unauthorised Absence

G holiday (not agreed)

N reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)

O absent in other or unknown circumstances

U late after register has closed

Z pupil not yet on register

planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)

Promoting and incentivising school attendance

Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for maximising attendance will involve work on our curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium.

Individual pupil attendance rates are included on termly school reports. Students with 100% attendance are recognised with a certificate after each report. The lower school form group with the highest attendance rate each week is publicised. The importance of regular school attendance is highlighted in assemblies and tutorials. Our approach to developing pupils' character prioritises ambitiousness & excellence, which is underpinned by excellent attendance at school.

In accordance with statutory guidance, schools must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without explanation. In accordance with statutory guidance, schools must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without explanation.

In accordance with statutory guidance, schools must report to Medway Local Authority when a pupil has accrued 15 days of absence due to medical reasons.

Children with low rates of attendance/ those who are persistently absent (more than 10% of school sessions).

We will look at attendance data each week and use this information to determine where we will target our attendance improvement efforts. Cause for concern letters, meetings with pastoral staff, requiring medical evidence to support absences, meetings with the Attendance Office, attendance clinics, attendance contracts and penalty notice will all be used.

Children Missing Education and Children Absent from Education

SJWMS recognises that all children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. SJWMS is aware that a child absent from, or going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

SJWMS has procedures in place for responding to unauthorised absence (see below) and for dealing with children that are absent from or go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation (particularly county lines), and to help prevent the risks of further absence or their going missing in future.

We will:

- Make calls and send emails to parents and emergency contacts
- Make home visits

- We will notify the local authority at Medway and provide all relevant information.

Communicating Attendance Data

Notice of term dates will be published at least a year in advance and will be posted on the school website.

Individual attendance rates, and the number of authorised/unauthorised absences, will be reported to parents/carers on an annual basis. This information may be recorded on any future reference.

Attendance Officers

The School is committed to reducing pupil absence to a minimum. In order to achieve this aim an Attendance Officer team is employed who will be the first point of contact with the School for a parent/carer wishing to report an absence.

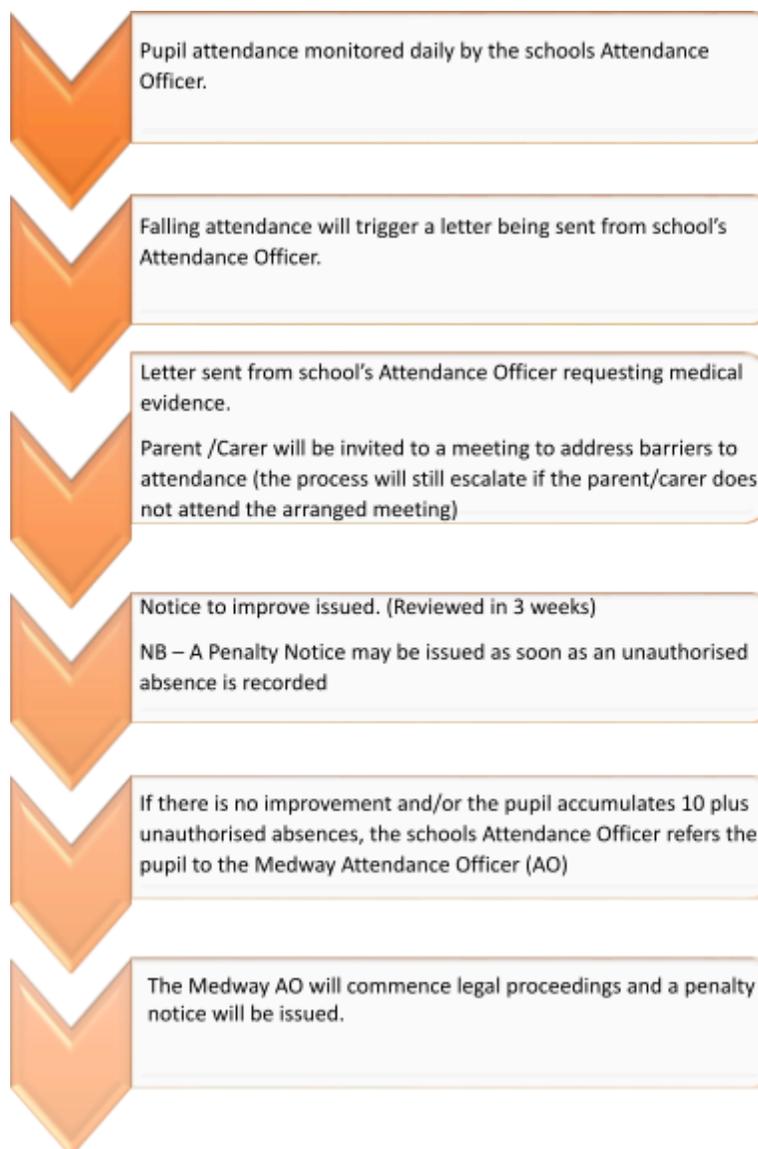
Unauthorised absence will be followed up by the Attendance Officers, who will work closely with pastoral staff to ensure that appropriate strategies/actions are initiated at the earliest opportunity. This will include telephone calls, attendance letters and attendance meetings.

Attendance escalation process

- The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that *'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... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'*
- Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support. As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 sessions of absence within a 10-week period, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email or letter. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:
 - Unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place, O code) arriving late after the register has closed (U Code), or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time (Unauthorised holiday – G code) These 10 weeks can span different terms.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period time scale for the improvement of attendance. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the Local Authority (LA) to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Escalation Process Flowchart



Sixth Form Attendance

Sixth Form Standards and Expectations

We expect the highest standards of conduct from our Sixth Form students to ensure they are ambassadors for the school; these standards and expectations are to be upheld, not only during lessons, but also during their study time with the expectation students independently study, extend and consolidate their learning in the dedicated study space. As young adults, our sixth form students are trusted with a number of freedoms and responsibilities that students in the main school do not.

Attendance and Punctuality

Good attendance and punctuality at SJWMS is vital to the well-being and future prospects of all our students. All staff, parents, students, carers and external agencies are expected to work towards the common goal of high attendance and excellent punctuality. It is important to note that attendance and punctuality are important parts of onward references.

Our attendance team will monitor daily attendance and punctuality. If attendance becomes a cause of concern we have a 3 stage approach to get attendance back on track.

Stage 1 Attendance Concern	A letter outlining attendance concerns is sent to parents. Medical evidence will be requested in the event of absence. Further decline in attendance, unauthorised absences or late attendance to school will trigger the Stage 2 Notice to Improve
Stage 2 Notice to Improve/Attendance Meeting	An attendance meeting will be arranged to discuss attendance issues. An attendance contract will be completed. Significant improvement will be expected. Attendance will continue to be monitored closely. Further decline in attendance or further unauthorised absences or an increase in late attendance - will trigger the Stage 3 Review of Contract
Stage 3 Review of Contract	<p>An attendance meeting will be arranged with a SLT member. Students may lose sixth form privileges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of all sixth form privileges (e.g.home study, study centre periods)• Removal of leadership roles• Removal of Colours• Removal of any membership of teams• Attendance to school on day off in lieu of Foundation Day (Year 12) or nominated day in the Easter break (Year 13)• Consideration will be given to the student repeating Year 12 <p>Poor attendance may also result in the loss of 16-19 Bursary payments.</p> <p>Immediate attendance improvement will be expected with no further unauthorised absences.</p>

Unauthorised absences - An unauthorised absence can be given for the following:

- If a student arrives to school after 9am and does not have a valid reason for being late
- If medical evidence is requested and not received
- If a student is absent from school and we have not received an email from the parent by 9am

Attendance Advisory Service

Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) AASSA has the right to consider taking legal action or the issue of a penalty notice against parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. Penalty notices are issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer of the child in line with the Medway Code of Practice. The AASSA works closely with the School and may convene home visits, send court warning letters and hold Pre Panel Proceeding meetings to which parents/carers and students are invited, in the event of attendance concerns. The AASSA may enforce the 1996 Education Act to instigate legal proceedings if required.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices have changed from August 2024 in line with the new DFE guidance.

The School is a strong supporter of the fixed penalty initiative and will provide whatever data/documentation is necessary to enable the Attendance Advisory Service to issue Fixed Penalty Notices whenever appropriate. The school will adhere to Dfe statutory guidance.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils/academies is both a legal requirement and essential in order for students to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies will continue to investigate cases of regular non-attendance from school and following appropriate casework, instigate action if applicable.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) gives the Local authority and Academy the power to issue penalty notices for unauthorised holidays in term time, and for unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions in any 10 week period. (Please note there are 2 sessions in a day AM and PM register).

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Any holiday related absence that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a penalty notice. In this instance a Notice to improve will not be issued beforehand.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

Ten unauthorised sessions of absence (including Holiday (G) / Unauthorised Absence (O) / Unauthorised Late (U)) may result in a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution through the Magistrates Court. Any non-payment will be referred to the Magistrates Court

In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a 3 rolling year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. A statutory attendance referral may be made to the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies AASSA at Medway and may result in prosecution.

Removing a Student from Roll

A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occurs, the pupil's name must be deleted. A pupil's name must not be removed for any other reason and doing so could constitute off-rolling.

All attendance letters will be sent by email/post.

Including a Student on the Admissions register

- We will only enter pupils on the admission register where we have received written confirmation that the person with control of the pupil's attendance has accepted the school place.
- Where the local authority has offered a place at the school but no written confirmation of acceptance has been received from the person with control of the pupil's attendance, we will write to the local authority requesting evidence in writing and will not enter the pupil onto the admission register until this has been received. If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the offer of a place will be withdrawn and offered to another pupil in accordance with our Admissions Policy.

- We will enter pupils' names on the admission register on the first day that the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance have agreed that the pupil will attend the school. If no date has been agreed or notified, the pupil's name will be entered on the first day they attend the school. Names must be added before, or at the beginning of the first session on that day.
- Where a pupil does not attend on the agreed date, we will send a letter to the person with control of the pupil's attendance asking them to confirm in writing within 10 school days that they wish to take up the place. If written confirmation is not received within 10 school days, the pupil's name will be removed from the admission register and the place offered to another pupil in accordance with the [admission policy](#).

Useful Links:

Early Help/Social Service referral -Medway:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/concerned_about_a_child_safeguarding_and_early_help/3

Social service referral - Kent:

<https://www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child>

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/kent-family-hub/keep-your-family-safe/report-child-abuse>

CAMHS referral:

<https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/how-to-refer>

Kent police (report a crime):

<https://www.kent.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Arriva Buses:

<https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/>