



Soham Village College

Attendance Policy

Version:	1
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Approved by:	SVC Advisory Body
Date:	Feb 2019
Review date:	Feb 2020
Workload:	No impact on teachers



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1. Introduction

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Research shows that student attendance of less than 95% can impact on student attainment by as much as a whole GCSE grade.

Soham Village College aims to:

- raise levels of achievement by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance, punctuality and involvement in the school
- ensure that every student has access to the education to which they are entitled
- be proactive to address early patterns of absence

2. Legal and National Context

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full-time education; and, that they have a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance and punctuality of that child at the school where he/she is a registered student. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

The law regarding **term time holidays** was clarified in 2017. We are obliged to follow the government guidelines which state that any time taken off during term time will be unauthorised and parents or carers liable to a penalty notice unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Such circumstances might include children taking time to see a family member who is forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting; a parent, grandparent or other close relative being seriously or terminally ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or if there has recently been a death or significant other trauma in the family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation. If leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence. A Penalty Notice, if issued, is per parent per child. The amount is £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. After 28 days the case is forwarded to the Magistrates' Court.

If you are uncertain as to whether a holiday might be classed as being an exceptional circumstance, then please feel free to contact the school and ask to speak to the Attendance Officer.

Students who have unauthorised absence of 10% or more are classified as persistent absentees. This generates referral to the Local Authority and legal procedures can result.

3. Implementation

The College will:

- ensure that school policy with regard to term-time holidays is clearly stated on the college website and is regularly communicated to parents;
- remind parents of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance;
- actively discourage parents from arranging holidays during term-time;
- inform parents that they do not have any right or entitlement to expect term-time leave to be granted and that all leave is granted at the discretion of the Headteacher (or those authorised to exercise discretion on his behalf);
- advise parents that if leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence;
- advise parents that non-attendance or absence that is unauthorised that is 90% or less could result in legal enforcement including Penalty Notices or prosecution;
- provide attendance data on the termly report, and
- report on attendance to the Advisory Body members.

4. Promoting Attendance

The school uses opportunities as they arise to remind parents and students of the importance of attendance for instance through parent information evenings, the student planner and home/school agreements. Attendance is also celebrated through assemblies, certificates and attendance awards. Students and parents are encouraged to use GO4School.

In addition the following personnel have a key role in supporting good attendance.

4.1. Senior Lead on Attendance (SLA)

The SLA will:

- give attendance a high profile at staff briefings and school events;
- monitor whole school absence and persistent absence data and regularly update the Senior Leadership Team;
- Meet with the Attendance Officer weekly to review attendance of students at the school and plan interventions for students causing concern;
- Communicate and support the implementation of these interventions with Year Heads and other stakeholders;
- refer to the Education Welfare Service if a student fails to meet an Attendance Target set following a Parent Contract Meeting;

4.2. Year heads

Year heads will:

- give attendance a high profile at assemblies and school events;
- monitor Year Group attendance and record keeping;

- implement a system of rewards and sanctions;
- support Form Tutors on issues of non-attendance and with internal truancy, remedying causes and applying sanctions;
- meet with parents to discuss attendance problems as soon as they are identified;
- Publish attendance data from Go4Schools in Head of Year weekly bulletins;
- lead on strategies to improve attendance of students who are identified as being a concern through meetings with students and parents;
- support the implementation of the 3 letter warning system;
- ensure work is provided for excluded students and long-term absentees;
- look for patterns of absences and consider impact of curriculum upon attendance alongside other possible causes, and
- work with the SLA, EWO, SENCO and Locality Team to create individual packages and reintegration plans, where appropriate.

4.3. Form Tutors

Form tutors will:

- be a good role model for students;
- give attendance a high profile;
- praise students for arriving on time;
- take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation, recording lateness and referring to Year head;
- keep an accurate register, and
- inform the Year head when absence is causing concern.

4.4. Attendance Officer

The attendance officer will:

- oversee administration of the Go4Schools system;
- oversee administration of the 3 letter warning system;
- collate evidence that may be required by the Education Welfare Service.
- streamline and make adjustments to systems and procedures;
- keep parents informed of any unexplained absences before they become unauthorised;
- support the work of the SLA, Year Heads and Form tutors by:
 - providing regular attendance information;

- message parents/carer on 1st day of absence and monitoring attendance and Punctuality, alerting Form Tutors and Year heads when concerns arise; using RS Engage
- liaising with Year Heads to monitor accuracy of record keeping;
- keeping the SLA informed of attendance issues through weekly reports, and
- keeping the SLA informed of inaccurate marking of staff registers as part of an alert system for staff who may not be maintaining accurate recording of registers.

4.5. Class Teachers

Teachers will:

- praise students for their punctuality to lessons;
- maintain an accurate class register,
- alert the Attendance officer if there are concerns over student absence.

4.6. Parents

Parents will:

- ensure that children leave for school on time every day;
- provide a written explanation for children's absences from school;
- endeavour not to take children out of school in term time;
- notify the school as soon as problems arise with child's attendance, and
- if no letter has been sent in advance telephone the school on the first morning child is absent.

4.7. Students

Students will:

- arrive at 8.25am for registration every morning at 8.30 am and 12.15pm for registration every afternoon;
- be punctual for lessons;
- make sure a note is sent from parents to explain absences;
- sign in at Student Services if they are late arriving for school;
- sign out at Reception if they leaving school during any part of the school day other than 3.00pm (with the exception of the handful of students with lunch passes), and
- tell their Form Tutor or Year head if they are having any problems attending school.

5. The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The school and EWS always endeavour to work with students and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. However, the EWS also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance have failed, the EWS can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates court. There are times when parents want to contact the EWS directly for help and advice.

6. The attendance team includes:

Attendance Officer
Senior Lead on Attendance (Assistant Principal)
Education Welfare Officer
Education Inclusion Manager
Soham Village College Year Heads

7. Support for Students and Parents

The College provides support for parents and students if they are struggling to attend school, including the following:

- Attendance Reports
- Attendance interviews and regular reviews with Year head
- Meetings with Year Heads, EWS and other external agencies to provide support for children and their parents
- Re-integration programme arranged between students, parents, Year head, SLT Inclusion and Inclusion Manager/SENCO if appropriate after long-term absence
- Re-integration timetables where appropriate
- Individualised curriculum where appropriate

8. Sanctions for Poor Attendance and Punctuality

The College reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfil its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Year head detention.
- Subject Department detention for punctuality
- Use of Exclusion Room for truancy or consistent poor punctuality
- Other, more serious sanctions, for repeated defiance of school rules

EWS involvement and referral:

- Generally, the school will instigate at least 3 interventions, whose purpose is to improve a student's attendance, before referring the case to the EWS (For example; an attendance phone call or email; a letter from the 3 letter system; a Parent Contract Meeting).
- Before referral to the EWS the school will offer the parent(s) a Parent Contract Meeting in which school actions may be agreed before an Attendance Target and Monitoring Period is set.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered student fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school offering the parent the opportunity to enter into a parenting contract following a student's truancy or non-attendance under section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered student fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school instigating a Penalty Notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (instigated by the Headteacher and Deputy and Assistant Principals authorised by them, or so authorised by the Local Authority);

- Parenting orders, Education Supervision Orders or Penalty Notices can also be issued by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LA.
- Prosecution by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LA.

Appendix A: Procedure for reporting absence at school

1. If a child is absent from school the following procedures are required to ensure the school is fully informed.

1.1. First day absence

- The College's Attendance Officer is contacted by the parent on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk
- Information is provided, including the reason for absence, student name and form group.
- On return to school, the parent **provides a note** with an explanation for absence, unless the reason has already been provided via school email.

1.2. Third day absence

- If the student is absent for three days, further contact with the Attendance Officer is required by the parent to provide details about the due date for a return to school by the student.

1.3. Continued absence

- In the case of longer term absence, the Attendance Officer is informed so that appropriate work or support can be provided.

1.4. Ten days' absence

A student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Team. This is a legal requirement.

2. If a child needs to be absent during the school day the following procedures are required.

- The school attendance officer is contacted by the parent on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk to inform of reason for absence during the day, e.g. dental appointment.
- The student must sign out before they leave the school premises and sign in on their return.

3. School action in the case of student absence

- On the first day of absence, the Attendance Officer will use the 'PS Engage' text service to confirm absence with the parent if contact has not already been made.
- In the case of student attendance that is deemed 'at risk', the parent will be invited to school to discuss absence and actions for improving attendance.
- In the case of a student absence moving towards the 90% Persistent Absence (PA) level, the student will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Appendix B: Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at Soham Village College. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital work and information. Lateness is also disruptive to lessons.

1. The school day

The school starts with a form registration at **8.30am**. Students are expected to be in their form room by **8.25am**. Any student who arrives after this time is registered as late.

Form registers are closed by **8.50am**. A student who is late after this time should sign in at Student Services, where they will be given a mark to show they are on site. However, this will be counted as an unauthorised absence for the morning session unless they have a genuine reason for lateness i.e. illness, medical.

Afternoon register starts in period 4 at **12.15pm**. Afternoon registers close at **12.30pm**

If a child arrives late to school, for example due to a dental appointment, a note must accompany the child on their return which they will give to the Attendance Officer when they sign in. In this case the absence will be recorded as authorised.

2. Lesson monitor

Every lesson is registered through the school internal system. Teachers are expected to ensure that the register is taken as promptly as possible. The reason for this is to track punctuality and in school truancy. It is essential that registers are recorded accurately, using the internal system. In the rare occasion that the register is not accessible on the system, a paper copy of the register should be used. In this case the teacher is expected to complete the register, not the students, and return it to the Attendance Officer, promptly.

If a student is late in arriving to lesson, the teacher will record lateness on the system. In this case, an N should be changed to an L.

The Year head has the overview of punctuality and will follow up lateness with individual students, who will be expected to make up the time lost. In cases of persistent lateness, Year heads will place students on monitoring report.

Appendix C: Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, either as authorised or unauthorised absence.

1. Authorised absences

Authorised absences are approved by the Year head, ESLT or Attendance Officer on behalf of the Principal. An example of an authorised absence that may be approved would be a morning or afternoon away from school for a reason such as illness or medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall within the school day.

All absence must always be accompanied with a note to explain absence, or by direct communication with the Attendance Officer on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk

2. Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which permission has not been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- unexplained absence;
- students who regularly arrive late, after registration has closed;
- holidays/days off school, and
- students staying off school for invalid reasons such as shopping, caring for siblings, etc.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings

3. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. The school monitors all absence thoroughly. If a child's absence is deemed to be 'at risk' of PA, the parent will be informed of this by the Year head or SLA. PA students are tracked through the pastoral system. Students at risk may also be referred to a Family Worker, who works with families to provide support and strategies to encourage attendance.

WHAT'S YOUR ATTENDANCE?

The more school you miss, the harder it is for you to make good progress.

% BAND	Level	Impact	Action
99+	Excellent	Maybe 1 or 2 days missed. Best chance of making good progress!	
97-99	Really good	Around 4 or 5 days missed. Really good chance of making good progress.	
95-97	Good	Up to 10 days missed. Decent chance of making good progress.	
90-95	Not good	Up to 20 days missed. To make good progress you'll have to work hard to catch up.	Tutor
85-90	Worry	Up to 30 days missed. To make good progress you'll have to work really hard to catch up.	SLT/HoY
0-85	Real concern	More than 30 days missed. Missing this much school will make it very difficult to make good progress.	Educational Welfare Officer