



St Francis Catholic Primary School

Working together to improve school attendance

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on an annual basis unless circumstances require policy update in the interim.

Approved by:

Date: 19th November 2024

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance.....	2
3. Roles and responsibilities.....	3
4. Recording attendance	4
6. Pupils with additional health needs	6
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence	6
6. Strategies for promoting attendance.....	7
7. Attendance monitoring.....	8
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	9
9. Links with other policies	9
Appendix 1: attendance codes.....	10

School Mission Statement

‘I am a sign of God’s love’

At St Francis we love, learn and grow in the footsteps of Jesus and are active signs of God’s love through praying, respecting and serving others.

AIMS

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE GOVERNOR BOARD

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

THE HEADTEACHER

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

THE DESIGNATED SENIOR LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head teacher
- Working with education attendance officers to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr E Garratt and can be contacted via the school office: 01922 682 583 or postbox@st-francis-p.walsall.sch.uk

THE EDUCATION ATTENDANCE OFFICER

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with the designated senior leader to tackle persistent absence

- Conducting phone calls and/ or home visits to establish reasons for absence
- Advising the head teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Supporting the school with attendance focus weeks, and 'Late gates'

The attendance officer is Ms H Morrison (EAO).

CLASS TEACHERS

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. The morning register closes at 8:55am, with the afternoon register closing no later than 1:20pm

SCHOOL OFFICE STAFF

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the designated senior leader for attendance in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

PARENTS/ CARERS

Parents/ carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return.
- After an absence, provide a letter detailing the reason for absence on the child's return to school.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

PUPILS

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. Pupils must arrive in school by 8:55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:45pm (KS1) and 1:15pm (KS2), and will be kept open for 5 minutes.

UNPLANNED ABSENCE

The pupil's parent/ carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

- Text message sent requesting reason for absence by 10:30am
- If no response, a member of SLT will phone first and second contact
- Where there is still no response, the Education Attendance Officer will be contacted and a home visit requested.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised (1-2 days) unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

PLANNED ABSENCE

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment, providing a copy of the appointment letter.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Where a pupil is consistently late (5 or more late arks in a 3 week period) a warning letter will be sent to parents/ carers. If there is little to no improvement, parents/ carers will be invited to a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team and the Education Attendance Officer.

FOLLOWING UP UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Text requesting the reason for absence.
- If no response by 10:30am - Call the pupil's parent/ carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the Education Attendance Officer requesting a home visit.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education attendance officer

REPORTING TO PARENTS/ CARERS

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly registration reports.

PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL HEALTH (MEDICAL) NEED

The school will provide support to pupils who are absent from school because of health (medical) needs by liaising with the pupil's parents to arrange school work as soon as the pupil is able to cope with it or part-time education at school. The school will give due consideration to which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised in consultation with the pupil, their family and relevant members of staff.

For extended periods of absence, either in one absence or over the course of a school year, the named person with responsibility for pupils with health needs will notify the LA, who will take responsibility for the pupil and their education.

Where absences are anticipated or known in advance, the school will liaise with the LA to enable education provision to be provided from the start of the pupil's absence.

For hospital admissions, the appointed named member of staff will liaise with the LA regarding the programme that should be followed while the pupil is in hospital. The LA will set up a personal education plan (PEP) for the pupil which will allow the school, the LA and the provider of the pupil's education to work together.

The school will monitor pupil attendance and mark registers to ensure it is clear whether a pupil is, or should be, receiving education otherwise than at school.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

APPROVAL FOR TERM-TIME ABSENCE

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the head teacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unforeseen and unavoidable situations that prevent a pupil from attending school, i.e. a serious family illness, bereavement or other crisis.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office on request. The head teacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Where no reason or evidence has been provided for a child's absence, and school believe they have been on holiday, the school will follow the unauthorised leave during term time procedures.

LEGAL SANCTIONS

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a head teacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

School strategies for rewarding and improving attendance include, but are not limited to:

- Attendance display – including pupil voice
- Attendance newsletter (at least one per half-term)
- Weekly attendance award
- Regular updates to parents (half-termly)
- Post cards to parents for improved attendance
- Attendance focus weeks (supported via the EAO)

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

ANALYSING ATTENDANCE

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

USING DATA TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The school will follow the 'Guidance for School Attendance Escalation' produced by Walsall Council (see Appendix 2), which includes:

- 'Cause for Concern' letters
- School attendance meetings
- Local Authority meetings
- Offer of Early Help
- Referrals
- Legal Intervention

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by the Designated Senior leader responsible for Attendance.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

APPENDIX 1: ATTENDANCE CODES

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Attendance and Absence Codes from school year 2024-25 (new codes shown in green)				
New Guidance - Chapter 8	Code	Description	Statistical Meaning	The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
Attending the School	/	Present at school - Morning Session.	Attending	Regulation 10(2) Table 1
	\	Present at school - Afternoon Session.	Attending	Regulation 10(2) Table 1
	L	Late arrival before the register is closed.	Attending	Regulation 10(2) Table 1
Attending a place other than the school	K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority. (Schools must also record the nature of the educational activity).	Attending approved education activity	Regulation 10(3) Table 2, 10(5) and 11(9)(b)
	V	Attending an educational visit or trip.	Attending approved education activity	Regulation 10(3) Table 2, 10(5) and 11(9)(c)
	P	Participating in a sporting activity.	Attending approved education activity	Regulation 10(3) Table 2, 10(11) and 11(10)
	W	Attending work experience.	Attending approved education activity	Regulation 10(3) Table 2, 10(11) and 11(10)
	B	Attending any other approved educational activity. (Schools must also record the nature of the educational activity).	Attending approved education activity	Regulation 10(3) Table 2, 10(5), 10(11) and 11(10)
	D	Dual registered at another school	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(9)(a)
Absent - Leave of Absence	C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(2)
	M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(11)
	J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution.	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(4)

	S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination.	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(5)
	X	Non -compulsory school age pupil not required to attend.	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(7) or (8)
	C2	Leave of absence for compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(6)
	C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 11(11)
Absent - other authorised reasons	T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	R	Religious observance	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	I	Illness	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause	Q	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 10(12)
	Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(10)
	Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 10(14)
	Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	Y7	Unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause. (Schools must also record the nature of the unavoidable cause).	Not counted as a possible session	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 10(6)
Absent - unauthorised absence	G	Holiday not granted by the school	Unauthorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3
	N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 10(7), (8) and (9)

	O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised absence	Regulation 10(4) Table 3 and 10(9)(b)
	U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised absence	Regulation 10(8)(b)
Administrative codes	Z	Pupil's name entered in advance of start date	N/A	N/A
	#	Planned whole school closure - no session to take place	N/A	N/A

APPENDIX 2: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ESCALATION

Guidance for School Attendance Escalation

