

# **St Francis of Assisi Catholic College**

***'Nil satis optimum'***



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

# Control Sheet

<b>Version number</b>	01
<b>Original date approved</b>	September 2022
<b>Current date approved</b>	September 2022
<b>Approved by</b>	Full Governors July 2022
<b>Date of next review</b>	July 2024
<b>Status</b>	Adopted
<b>Policy owner</b>	Head Teacher
<b>Policy location</b>	Staff Shared Area
<b>Target group</b>	Staff, parents, pupils
<b>Consultation</b>	College Union Representatives and Staff

<b>Document History:</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date of review</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Note of revisions</b>

Associated documents:	
<b>College Policies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding</li> <li>• Staff Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> </ul>	
Links to:	
<b>Statutory Guidance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gov.uk <a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education</a></li> <li>• DfE <a href="#">Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England 2012 (updated September 2017)</a></li> <li>• DfE <a href="#">Behaviour and Discipline in Schools</a></li> </ul> <b>Non-Statutory Guidance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfE <a href="#">Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies</a></li> <li>• DfE <a href="#">Ensuring Good Behaviour in Schools</a></li> <li>• DfE <a href="#">Mental health and behaviour in schools</a></li> </ul>	

## 1. Statement of intent

St Francis of Assisi Catholic College (referred to forthwith as ‘the College’) has and embraces an ethos of inclusivity. We wish to see success for all young people and recognise the uniqueness of each individual created in the image of God. This Policy is unique to our College and is the result of the constant ongoing review and evaluation of the College processes for managing student attendance. We believe it ensures that expectations remain high whilst also understanding that one size does not fit all and that some young people require both adjustment and significant wrap-around care. We aspire to work extremely closely with parents, local authorities and other partners to remove the barriers to meeting attendance expectations that some young people face. The Policy also defines our expectations for the strong relationships and mutual respect between individuals that permeate the College.

The College has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. All our staff are committed to working with parents and students to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Equally, parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend. Parents have access to the DfE information on attendance [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818204/School\\_attendance\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf)

This Policy and its implementation will work in tandem with our vulnerable students' register and SEND provision map to allow the College to take a holistic approach to supporting all young people in line with our vision of '*Nil satis optimum*' for our students.

## **Statutory Responsibilities**

The College maintains its attendance and admission records in accordance with The Education (Pupil Attendance Records) Regulation 2006 and The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 1995 (amended 1997).

## **The Importance of Regular Attendance**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and leaves them vulnerable to falling behind. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Under the Education Act 1996, ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

To achieve this The College will:

- Report to you how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance;
- Rewarding also good or improving attendance.

## Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by The College (not by parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for an appropriate reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Parents are requested to provide evidence of medical appointments so that absences can be authorised.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which The College does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to The College using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between The College, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending, as this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

## Persistent Absence (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year **for any reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we require parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation in order to resolve this. In order to support any student who falls into this category or whose attendance is becoming a concern (below 95%), medical evidence of absences is requested in order to support your child returning to school.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. Any PA students will be offered additional support through a mentor or coach.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Headteacher and referred to The Colleges Education Welfare Officer.

## **Absence Procedures**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Failure to inform school of absence may result in child missing in education procedures and referrals to other agencies.

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- **contact The College via telephone before 8.30am on each absence day;**
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence and medical evidence for illnesses – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- contact you by text message on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, to remind you to contact us. The College has a statutory duty to safeguard children, so if we are concerned about your child's welfare, a home visit will be carried out if we cannot make contact via telephone. This will be recorded and where concerns persist referrals will be made to other agencies such as the police and/or social services;
- attempt to make contact after more than two days of absence to check on progress – this will usually be done by the Attendance officer or Schools Educational Welfare Officer (SEWO)
- invite you to The College to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or SEWO or HAL if absences persist.

## **Contact Details**

There are times when we need to contact parents about various issues, including absence, so we need to have the correct contact details for you and all those on your child's emergency contacts list at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date contact details, including mobile telephone numbers and email addresses. It is required that all children have more than 1 emergency contact.

## **Sanctions**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Attendance Officer may refer the child to the Senior Leadership Team or Welfare/ Pastoral Team where necessary. We will try to resolve the situation by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Headteacher can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Education Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Walsall's School Attendance Support Team Service to ask for help or information. The School Attendance Support Team is independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

## **Truancy**

On the rare occasions where a student is absent from The College without the knowledge of their parent/carer, the following procedure will be followed:

- The student's absence will not be authorised
- The student and parent/carer will be asked to attend a meeting at The College at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to discuss the reasoning behind the student's decision to be absent
- Relevant support will be implemented where necessary
- The student's attendance will be closely monitored for the remainder of the academic year
- Future absence without a valid reason will not be authorised
- Persistent unauthorised absence can be used to instigate court proceedings under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996

Parents and carers are welcome to raise any concerns they may have regarding their child's persistent reluctance to attend school with the HAL, or Welfare Team

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they will miss out on vital information for the lesson ahead. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child, inconvenient for the teacher and distracting for other students. This can also encourage absence.

#### **How we manage lateness:**

- The school day starts at **08.55am**. We expect your child to be in their Line up by 08:55 at the latest. This is where they will receive their morning mark.
- During taught sessions, students who arrive after the movement (second bell) will receive a late mark and will receive a same day detention for 20 minutes.
- In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, if your child arrives after 09:45 and cannot give a valid reason, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence on their attendance record. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

#### **Leave of Absence During Term Time**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by refraining from taking holidays during term time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.**

Due to amendments to the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*, as of 1 September 2013, Headteachers **may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, babysitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping.

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.



If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then you will be required to make the request through the **Leave of Absence Form** which is accessible via the Attendance Officer. All forms will need to be returned for the attention of the Headteacher.

As part of The College policy we will make a referral to the School Attendance Support Team for students who take unauthorised leave of four consecutive days or more. Such a referral may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance can be fined £60 (per parent, per child). If the payment is not made within 21 days, this fee increases to £120. If not paid after 28 days it will be escalated to the courts.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, GCSE, A level or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

### **Children who Cannot Attend School Due to Medical Reasons**

This procedure aims to ensure that:

- suitable education is arranged for students on roll who cannot attend school due to health needs. Health needs include both physical and mental health.
- students, staff and parents understand what the school is responsible for when a student cannot attend school due to health reasons.

Regular attendance at The College is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. The College believes that regular attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the learning opportunities available to them while become emotionally resilient, confident and competent employable adults, belong, achieve and make a positive contribution to their community. The College values all students and we recognise the importance of the wider student experience.

Where The College has significant concerns regarding a student's repeated or lengthy absence due to illness, we reserve the right to insist that medical evidence is provided such as a doctor's note, a hospital appointment letter, etc. before authorising the absence. Where evidence is not provided, the absence will be classed as unauthorised.

### **College Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives**

The College has set targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the region.

Throughout the school year we monitor absence and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

We celebrate students with good attendance throughout the year and highlight and reward those students who continually attend school.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our termly mailings and we ask for your full support.