

St Francis of Assisi Catholic College

'Nil satis optimum'



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Control Sheet

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Policy owner	Head Teacher
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Target group	Staff, parents, pupils
Consultation	College Union Representatives and Staff

Document History:			
Version	Date of review	Author	Note of revisions
2	Sept 2024	L. Salkeld	Updated based on Working together to improve school attendance

Associated documents:	
College Policies: • Safeguarding • Staff Code of Conduct • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion • Health and Safety	
Links to:	
Statutory Guidance: • Working together to improve school attendance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf • Gov.uk Keeping Children Safe in Education • DfE Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England 2012 (updated September 2017) • DfE Behaviour and Discipline in Schools • DfE Working together to improve school attendance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf • Non-Statutory Guidance: • DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies • DfE Ensuring Good Behaviour in Schools • DfE Mental health and behaviour in schools •	

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://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

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 SFA 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;
- Reward 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.

Granting leaves of absence

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 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1)
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)
- Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school

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 during school hours.

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 Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Severe Absence (50%)

A student becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the academic year **for any reason**. These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

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 day of absence;
- send in any 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 are in Appendix 1 and 2.

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 / Punctuality

Poor punctuality is unacceptable and a bad habit. 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 08:53 at the latest. This is where they will receive their morning mark at 08:55.

- If a student is late after this point we must record this as such.
- During taught sessions, students who arrive after the movement (second bell) will receive a late mark and will receive a sanction.
- 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

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 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1)
 - Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
 - Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
 - A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)
- 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.
- Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

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.

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.

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.

Parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance can be given a Penalty Notice:

1st Offence = Penalty Notice £160 reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days **per parent** (start of 3-year period)

2nd Offence = Penalty Notice £160 Fixed **per parent**

A third penalty notice cannot be issued, any further offences will result in court action.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could receive a fine of up to £2,500. A Penalty Notice may be issued for 10 unauthorised (which is equal to 5 days, or 10 sessions) of unauthorised leave over a ten week period

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.

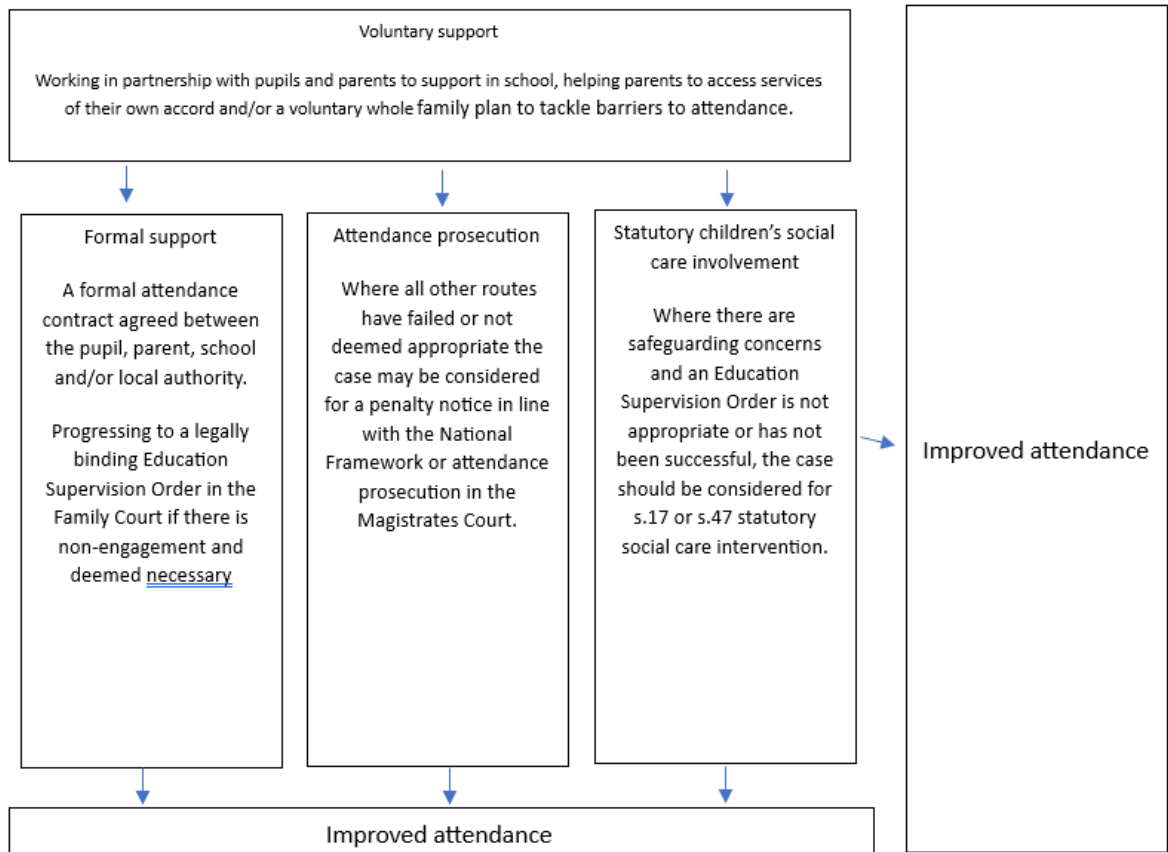
We celebrate students with good attendance throughout the year and highlight and reward those students who continually attend school.

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.

Appendix 1

Attendance legal intervention

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Appendix 2 Attendance trigger Timescales

Timescale/ Trigger	Action
5 days/ 10 sessions	Attendance Warning Letter 1
Further absence from school	Attendance Warning Letter 2
Further absence from school	• Invitation to an attendance action plan meeting with attendance manager • Invitation to Early Support Plan (Early Help) meeting to support the family • In some cases a 'Notice to Improve' letter will accompany this where pupils are referred to the EWO for a 10- week monitoring period. • The EWO will send letters and request meetings when appropriate
5 days/ 10 sessions of absence during the 10 week monitoring period	A fixed penalty notice to be submitted by St Francis to the Local Authority