

## St. Francis CE (Aided) Junior School



### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Academic Year**

**2023/2024**

#### Our Vision

Through our planned curriculum, enrichment activities and school ethos, we aspire to develop our children into responsible global citizens who will be able to enjoy fully our diverse world and have many choices and opportunities open to them.

We hope that by Year 7 our children are able to shine their light further into the community (rather than hiding it), while maintaining a strong sense of self-identity, valuing who they are and showing humility and endurance in lifelong learning.

We take inspiration from Matthew 5: 14-16:

<sup>4</sup> “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Agreed: October 2023

Review: September 2024

Approved by: Governing Body/Curriculum Committee

St Francis CE (Aided) Junior School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 97% has been set for the **academic year 2023/2024** and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DFE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

## **1. Attendance and Attainment**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **We will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

## **2. The Law**

You need to make sure your child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, you will be **breaking the law** if you do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The School and Local Authority **want to help you if you have a problem**. If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. **In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.**

## **3. Attendance Procedures**

### **a) On the first day off and any further absence**

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office before 8.55am giving a reason for the child's absence. Parents and carers can also send an email to school or send a text message to the school mobile. Parents/carers should contact school prior to 8.55 AM for safeguarding purposes. If parents and carers do not contact school by 8.55 AM, school will phone home to inform parents and request a reason for absence.

Doctors and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If children are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they

need to.

#### **b) Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues beyond 2 days (or anything not sickness bug / COVID-19 related), parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

#### **If your child is absent from school more than they should be:**

Miss Mason will use our school's computer system to analyse absence across the school every week. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to frequent hospital appointments and/or long term medical needs).

#### **c) Help & Support:**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you talk to the school about the issues as soon as possible. You may need to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place to help. Sometimes, school may need to involve other services to help.

#### **d) Communication:**

School will always communicate with parents / carers if we have any concerns about a child's attendance. This may be done by phone call, text message or email. It could also be through a cause for concern letter. Depending on the severity of the absence, school may also invite you to a meeting to set targets for improving attendance. These are called an Attendance Planning Meeting. We will always aim to discuss ways that we can offer support to you and want to work with you if you need help.

School will also expect you as a parent / carer to communicate with school reasons for absence. If phone calls, text messages and emails are not responded to, this will be logged as a safeguarding concern, as we do not know if your child is safe and well. Communication with school is paramount to ensure no referrals are made to the social care team. In extreme circumstances when communication cannot be made with parents over a number of days, school may request the police to do a welfare call, to ensure the family is safe.

#### **e) Enforcement Action:**

If, following the schools attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or you have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation, the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. If your child misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school a lot, the school may ask to you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

#### **f) Punctuality:**

Registration time is at **8.55am and between 12.40 and 12.55 depending on year group** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school after 9.10am then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 20 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

#### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbour).

#### **1. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions;**

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Positive Futures Worker – Miss Mason, will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g. improving their punctuality over 2 weeks to earn a school alarm clock or a sticker chart.

#### **2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason –**

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher or deputy head for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

#### **3. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;**

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

#### **g) Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

### **5. Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

At St. Francis, we promote good attendance in a number of ways. First, in our weekly celebration assembly, the class with the best overall attendance will be awarded ice cream on the yard the following play time. During these assemblies we promote awareness of the importance of good attendance and all children understand that we aim for upwards of 97%. Further to this, weekly attendance percentages of each class will be shared with parents on our Sway Newsletter which is sent out every Thursday PM.

Individual children's attendance percentages are shared with parents during termly meetings as well as on reports sent home to parents which contain a breakdown of attendance. Children who are classed as a persistent absentee may also have an "Attendance Sticker Chart". On the days the child attends school they will receive a sticker on their chart. Collecting stickers means children will earn prizes for attending school. This is a great visual initiative for children and we have found this is very effective.

At St. Francis children are able to earn a weekly raffle ticket if they have attended, on time, every day that week. These raffle tickets will be drawn at the end of every half term, with the children pulled out receiving prizes. These prizes are displayed in the hall, under our attendance display. Children know they stand a better chance of receiving a prize if they are attending every week, on time.

### **6. Children Missing from Education:**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Governing Body:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

### **School Leadership Team:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Behaviour and Attendance Governors Sub Committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

### **Teachers and support staff:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

#### **Parents / Carers:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.