

# St Francis Horndale CE Primary School



## **Attendance Policy**

Academic Year: 2025/2026

### Our Vision

*Let your light shine bright!*

*#inspiredtoshinebright*

We aim for all our children to achieve their full potential and to thrive in the modern world. We encourage confident and independent global citizens who have a love of learning. This is underpinned by the teaching of Christian values. These enable children to cultivate compassion, integrity, and respect, fostering their overall development and character formation.

Matthew 5: 14-16 provides us with our school vision that helps us live out the school foundation of educating children living in poverty. Matthew teaches us the need for self-worth, self-confidence and resilience to find and then shine our lights bright. By shining we support the academic and personal development of ourselves and our wider school family.

Written: July 2025

Review: July 2026

Approved by: Governing Body

St Francis Horndale CE Primary 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 2025/2026** 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 8.50am 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 should contact school prior to 8.50 AM for safeguarding purposes. If parents and carers do not contact school by 8.50 AM, school will phone home to inform parents and request a reason for absence.

School will require parents or carers provide sufficient reasoning for their child being absent from school. If Parents / Carers inform school that their child is "not well" or are "poorly" for example, school will request more information is given in order to authorise the 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 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:**

Our admin team 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 Support 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 **8.50am and between 12.45pm and 13:05pm 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 9.00am then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at 9.20am and any children arriving after this time 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 your child's teacher may 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 prize 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 'support meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality and work together to resolve this.

#### **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.**

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

At St Francis Horndale CE Primary School, we promote good attendance and punctuality in a number of ways. First, in our weekly celebration Collective Worship, the class with the best overall weekly attendance percentage will be awarded with a visit from OTIS – our school attendance mascot. Otis (On Time In School) is our school teddy and will be a visitor in the winning's year group's classroom for the week.

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 Horndale CE Primary School 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 who are part of the school council will decide what these prizes will be. Children know they stand a better chance of receiving a prize if they are attending every week, on time.

#### **5. 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**.

## **6. 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.