

Attendance Arrangements

St Francis' Catholic Primary School



Approved by FGB on: Sept 2022

Committee Responsible: N/A

Next review due by: Sept 2023

Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Our school aims to have an overall attendance of 97%.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

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

School procedures

Attendance register: By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark (see appendix 1 for registration codes) 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

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

Unplanned absence: Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible.

Please see appendix 2 procedures for children missing in education

Absence due to illness will be authorised 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 parents/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.

Medical or dental appointments: Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance, using the 'Pupil Absence Request for Exceptional Circumstances' form found on the school website under the 'Information' tab.

Lateness and punctuality: A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

In accordance with our general policy of communicating with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity, we always informally seek to understand reasons for punctuality issues as soon as possible, in order to minimise habit-forming and persistent problems.

Reporting to parents/carers: Attendance figures are included in the annual written report and on all requests for leave during school term time. Where attendance is lower than 92%, letters from the Head of School will be sent making parents/carers aware.

Granting approval for term-time absence: Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. St Francis' School follows the North Somerset guidelines for authorized and unauthorized absences.

Exceptional Circumstances that may be considered include:

1. Absence for bereavement
2. Serious illness in the family
3. Funerals
4. Immediate family member wedding
5. Attend graduation ceremony of parent
6. Holiday with a terminally ill parent/sibling
7. Holiday with a parent returning from active duty abroad
8. Citizenship ceremony
9. Religious ceremony up to 2 days

Legal sanctions: By law, parents/carers can be fined for unauthorized absences via Penalty Notice Fines.

Fixed Penalty Notices

In cases where the school has followed its procedures, undertaken relevant checks, identified the absence of the pupil as unauthorised, recorded it in the register as such and the pupil has a minimum of 10 unauthorised absences, continuous or aggregated, in the previous 6-month period then a Penalty Notice (monetary fine) will be issued.

In cases where a parent/carer continually fails to provide an explanation for a pupil's unauthorised absence, or where the reasons being given are determined to be unauthorised according to the schools policy and procedures and the parent/carer has failed to cooperate with strategies to improve their child's attendance, the school may escalate this to the Education Welfare Officer, and if approved, a Penalty Notice may be issued providing the pupil has had a minimum of 10 unauthorised absences, continuous or aggregated, in the previous 6 months.

10 unauthorised absences = 5 days

Data: Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board: The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher: The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.

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.

Office staff: Office staff are expected to take calls from parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system. They are also expected to alert the head or deputy / senior leaders of any unexplained or questionable absences or patterns of absences.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Procedure for Children Missing Education

Pupils New to the School

- Once a pupil is allocated a place (whether new intake or in-year admission) the school will take responsibility to find out where the pupil is if s/he fails to attend on the agreed start date
- Any pupil failing to attend on the agreed start date will be admitted to the school roll and must be listed on the admissions and attendance register
- The school will follow the guidelines listed below to establish the reason for absence and mark the register as an unauthorised attendance
- The school will update its SIMS systems with all new expected admissions
- The school will notify the local authority within five days of any in-year applications and the outcome of these applications
- If a child arrives in school with an unknown previous school, the Core Data Team will be contacted to enable them to carry out a DfE School to School check

Pupils on Roll

- The guidelines set out in this document will be followed from the first day of a child's unexplained absence from school
- When a parent/carer informs the school that a pupil will be living at another address, the school will record the full name of the parent/carer with whom the child will live, the new address and the date on which the child will start living at the address
- A pupil on roll who has no known address and is not attending school may be treated as missing from education
- A pupil who has been excluded with no new school place or provision may be treated as missing from education

Pupils Leaving the School

- Common Transfer Files will be sent to the child's new school within 15 school days of the child's last day as a registered pupil
- The name of the new school and the date on which the child is due to start attending the new school will be recorded on the admission register
- When a child leaves the school and no destination is known, a file should be generated for the pupil and the destination shown as LA number XXX and school number XXXX (DfE school2school database)
- When a child leaves the school and the destination is outside the maintained sector in England and Wales, a file should be generated for the pupil and the destination shown as LA number MMM and school number MMMM (DfE school2school database)
- The school will ask for and keep written confirmation from the parents/carers of children who are moving abroad and will ask for contact details (personal address and telephone number and new school address etc). The school will request confirmation of the child's attendance at the new school; if this is not forthcoming within 12 weeks, the child should be treated as missing from education.

Guidelines for when a child is absent from school

1. School office will check no message has been received via teachers on Dojo as soon as absence is noted as unaccounted for
2. School to call all known contacts on the first day of the child's absence as soon as is practically possible
3. At the same time as above, school office will speak with other family members at the school
4. If child still unaccounted for and by 10am, school office will speak to staff at siblings' schools if known
5. If no satisfactory reason secured, a senior member of school staff will visit child's home address as soon as possible but by 11am, repeatedly if necessary and may inform the police and social services at this point
6. Within ten days of the child's first absence from school, but sooner if it is deemed for the child's safety, the school must treat the child as potentially missing from education and inform the Local Authority

Guidelines for Child Missing while in the Care of School

St Francis' Catholic Primary School takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children do not leave a session unaccompanied. Many of our school routines and procedures are in place to contribute to the prevention of a child going missing and to ensuring the safety and security of all children at all times. In the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere
- One member of staff to immediately inform school office / Headteacher or member of staff in charge and check whether the child is legitimately off-site, has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional. One member of the office staff will manage the school gates and ensure phones are answered.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout incident and that no other pupils are missing.

Consideration will then be given as to whether the search should be extended beyond the school buildings and grounds. This decision will be based on staff knowledge of the child and levels of risk and on what action is in the child's best interests. The most senior member of staff in the school will be responsible for this decision.

Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), school office staff will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility. Every unsuccessful attempt to make contact with the parents/carers will be recorded alongside the time the call was made.

At this point, school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Headteacher or most senior member of staff available will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.

Stage Three

- The Headteacher should communicate the incident to the Chair of Governors
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the pupil's confidential record
 - Appropriate discussions, review of the incident and any consequences to the child will be carried out in a calm manner and environment as soon as possible after the event
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

Procedures for children who abscond from school

We actively work to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where children want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. Although incidents of pupils absconding are rare, these procedures are in place to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

Our first aim must always be to do what we can to keep the child and other children safe and not exacerbate any difficult situations. We recognise that children who abscond are in need of our help and reassurance, and we expect vulnerable children to be treated calmly and respectfully by staff and with understanding of the potential causes of the need to abscond. Staff are not expected to put themselves at risk or in danger of potential injury or harm. Staff are not expected to physically restrain children.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission' Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities. Although some of the perimeter of the site is fenced and the main entrances have electronic release systems, we recognise that it is possible to circumvent these barriers.

The Procedure is as Follows:

1. Follow stages 1, 2 and 3 as above for all children missing when in the care of school
2. Once the child is back in school, the most senior member of staff will decide what action needs to be taken. This will largely depend on the individual child and his / her situation but might include consequences, discussion with parents/carers, referral to the SENDCo or to an outside agency.

Procedure in the event of a decision to follow the child:

- Staff will be directed by the head teacher

- Any staff member leaving the school site will take a mobile phone with a number known to the school
- Staff are to follow the child calmly at a reasonable distance. There must be no sense of chase or panic
- If staff are directed to follow by car, they will do so at a safe distance with the utmost caution, giving priority to their own and others' safety
- Staff following the child must keep in close contact with the school office
- Members of staff approaching the child must use their professional judgement and make the safety of the child the first priority. It may be that a discussion is enough to bring the child back to school
- Once the child is back in school, the parents/carers must be informed
- The most senior teacher will then make a decision about next steps.