

# Attendance Policy



## Mission Statement

**As a Catholic School, we come together to celebrate our love of God and each other.**

**Through prayer we follow Jesus' example of love, forgiveness and truth. We are a safe and happy community where every individual is supported and encouraged to achieve their targets.**

## **We believe, that with God, everything is in our reach.**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 St. Francis RC Primary School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 St. Francis RC Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 St. Francis RC Primary School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

### **2. Legal Framework**

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **3. Categorising absence**

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher/school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

3.9 Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the head teacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**.

3.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

3.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

3.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.

3.10 Religious Observance St. Francis RC Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

3.11 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

3.12 Late Arrival: The school gates open at 8:40am and children are expected to arrive before 8.50am. The registers will close at 8.50am and any child arriving between 8.50 and-9:10am will be marked as late. Any child arriving after 9:10 will be recorded as unauthorised (U) and will count as an absence\_for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

3.12.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office with their parents to sign in to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. Parents must accompany their children and provide a reason for their lateness.

3.12.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Evidence of the medical appointment must be provided for it to be authorised.

3.12.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

3.13 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher/principal.

3.13.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays

#### **4. Deletions from the Register**

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed

- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

4.2 St. Francis RC Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **5. Absence Protocol**

5.1 In the event your child will not be in school you are required to phone school before 8:30am and give the reason for absence and an expected date of return

5.2 The school will make contact directly with parent/carer on the first day of absence and discuss further. We may ask for medical evidence in order to authorise absence.

5.3 If school are not able to make contact, we will send a letter

5.4 If school have not made contact after 3 school days. we may complete an unannounced home visit in order to follow safeguarding procedures, therefore it is imperative you are in contact with school. If we have had contact with you but your child has not arrived back to school within 5 school days without reasonable explanation. we will complete a home visit

5.5 If your child has arrived late to school and is not with an adult you will be contacted either by text message or phone. This will be monitored and if it happens two times or more the headteacher will make contact with you to discuss.

5.6 If your child leaves during the morning session for a pre-booked appointment and does not return to school the afternoon session may be marked as an unauthorised absence this will be agreed by the headteache

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

6.1 St. Francis RC Primary School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets with governing body
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

6.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource (see appendix 1)

- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

### 6.3 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a written explanation.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Head Teacher.

## **7. Support Systems**

7.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 St. Francis RC Primary School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Referrals to support agencies
- PSHE
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, St. Francis RC Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **8. Legal Sanctions**

8.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.



8.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

8.2 Home School Agreement (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Home School Agreement is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

8.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

7.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

8.3 Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher/principal.

8.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

8.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol

## **Appendix 1**

### **Escalation of Attendance Interventions**

#### **Pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%**

Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.

Pupils will be rewarded within the school's merit system.

Pupils with this level of termly and annual attendance will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be displayed on the school attendance notice/display board.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team/the Head of Year will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

#### **Pupils with attendance between 96% and 90%**

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school
- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

#### **Pupils with attendance below 90%**

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, pupils will be grouped in to one of the following categories:

- Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register
- Special Educational Needs
- Long term non attendance

- Parental support/needs eg parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence
- School issues eg bullying, poor teacher/pupil relationship, curriculum issues
- English as an Additional Language
- Ethnic minority
- Mid Year Admissions
- Gifted and Talented
- Other

The person responsible for attendance will:

- Ensure that weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils within their group

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team meetings where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

The headteacher will report to the Chair of Governors/Governor for Attendance each half term and will report termly to the Governing Body.