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Statutory:	Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated

Attendance Policy

St Francis CE Primary School

Approved by:	**Education Quality Standards & Safeguarding**
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Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and regularly thereafter through our school newsletter and other relevant opportunities.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full by both Board of Trustees and the Local Governing Body (LGB) on at least an annual basis.

1. Introduction

At St Francis CE Primary School we recognise that positive behaviour and good school attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a wide range of evidence as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly and on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the suitable, full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

Our policy outlines the school's commitment to attendance. It aims to provide clear guidance to all staff, parents & carers, pupils, LGB members and Trustees about the responsibilities and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We 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, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant legislation.

2. School Attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Throughout this policy, the term 'parents 'will refer to parents and carers with parental responsibility. A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time, and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

At St Francis CE Primary School we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The names and contact details of key staff with responsibility for the management of attendance are outlined below, in line with "Working together to improve school attendance" requirements:

Role	Name	Contact details
Senior Attendance Champion (Senior leader responsible for strategic approach)	Fleur Belcher and Simon Bushell	headteacher@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk
Attendance Officer (If different from the Attendance Champion)	Susan Hooker	susan.hooker@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk
Named LGB member for Attendance (or safeguarding LGB member)	Rob MacDougall	Via school office

Improving school attendance is everyone's business; it is a shared responsibility of LGB members and Trustees, all school staff, parents, pupils, and the wider school community. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is a collective responsibility.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers information about attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and its impact on their progress.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department for Education, in line with statutory expectations.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Boby

The Local Governing Body of St Francis CE Primary School recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies. They take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded from harm.
- Identifying a member of the LGB to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior attendance champion.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the school engages and works effectively with the local authority Attendance Team and wider local partners and services to address barriers to school attendance.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and adapting support to individual needs, including long-term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker, or cohorts with historically lower attendance.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and access to good practice networks.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement it.

Governance Strategic Reporting and Oversight:

To ensure robust strategic oversight and measurable evaluation, the Local Governing Body will regularly review attendance trends. Governors must explicitly receive termly attendance reports that detail the following specific metrics:

- Attendance data thoroughly broken down by vulnerable groups.
- Persistent absence (PA) metrics.
- Severe absence (SA) metrics.
- Clean data comparisons against national benchmarking figures

The senior Management Team (including the Senior Attendance Champion)

The Senior Management Team (including senior attendance champion) will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to all pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with high-quality teaching and learning experiences.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that it is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Fulfil regulations, allocate sufficient time/resources to the senior attendance champion, and return data to the LA/DfE on time.
- Report school attendance and related trends through termly reporting to the LGB via the Headteacher report and in meetings with the safeguarding LGB lead.
- Ensure data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes/patterns of absence, devise solutions, and evaluate interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and document interventions to the standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance.

All School Staff

All staff will actively promote attendance, build positive relationships with families, contribute to a whole-school supportive culture, comply with regulations, and record registers accurately and in a timely manner.

The member of staff responsible for attendance will support good habits, manage individual pupil casework files, coordinate individual action plans (such as Early Help Assessments or attendance contracts), execute first-day calling procedures, run reward schemes, and make referrals to external agencies.

Parents

Parents are requested to:

- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of school or home life at the earliest opportunity.
- Take a positive interest in their child's education, ensure regular attendance, and establish healthy home routines.
- Contact the school immediately on the morning of an absence, providing a clear explanation and expected date of return.
- Avoid unnecessary absences (e.g., booking medical and dental appointments outside of school hours).
- Attend all formal meetings requested by the school to discuss attendance concerns.

Pupils

Pupils will be aware of their timetable and attendance expectations, follow late registration procedures when necessary, arrive at every lesson ready to learn on time, and talk to a trusted member of staff if they face difficulties at school or home affecting their attendance.

4. Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling, seriously impacts their learning journey, and can disrupt the learning of other pupils. Allowing absence without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence (a 'session') must be classified by the school not by the parent as either authorised or unauthorised. The decision to authorise absences rests entirely at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Authorised absences: Morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine, verified reason accepted by the Headteacher (e.g., severe illness, urgent medical/dental appointments that cannot be booked outside school hours, or religious observances).

Unauthorised absences: Sessions away from school for reasons the school does not consider acceptable, or where no explanation was provided. This includes keeping children off for shopping, birthdays, mild non-infectious conditions, late nights, or term-time holidays that were not explicitly approved as 'exceptional' by the Headteacher. This type of absence can lead to penalty notices and legal action.

4.1 Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent Absence (PA): Defined by the Government as missing 10% or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason (authorised or unauthorised). This equates to approximately 19 school days or 38 sessions.

Severe Absence (SA): Defined by the Government as missing 50% or more of schooling across the academic year. This cohort faces significant barriers and requires intensive, multi-agency support.

Where emerging concerns are identified, the school will act immediately and will not wait until attendance falls below 90% before offering intervention. Failure by parents to engage with support can result in a referral to the Local Authority for prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, which carries criminal convictions and statutory fines up to £2,500 or a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

4.2 Leave of Absence

Leave of absence during term time is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher under 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents must apply in writing at least one month in advance. Retrospective requests will automatically be categorised as unauthorised and may trigger a penalty notice referral.

Leave is highly unlikely to be authorised if the pupil's attendance is below 96%, if there is any history of truancy, or if a repeating pattern (such as annual requests) is identified. If a pupil fails to return on the agreed date and contact is broken, the school will initiate Children Missing Education procedures with the Local Authority.

4.3 Medical Appointments and Absence Due to Illness

Parents must make every effort to book appointments outside of school hours. If unavoidable, a student must follow the school signing-out procedure and should only be absent for the minimum duration of the appointment itself rather than a full school day.

Medical Evidence and Casual Illness Verification:

1. While medical evidence will not normally be required for casual illness, the school explicitly reserves the right to request official medical evidence, certification, or appointment confirmation where specific conditions are met: where specific attendance concerns already exist
2. where there is an established, recurring pattern of illness absence, or
3. where there are underlying safeguarding concerns.

If the school remains unsatisfied regarding the authenticity of a reported illness, the session will be marked as an unauthorised absence. Where chronic, complex, or long-term health conditions are verified, the school will actively formulate an Individual Healthcare Plan and work in close partnership with local authority services to guarantee educational accessibility. In these instances, families will also be offered a formal opportunity to complete a holistic Strengths and Needs Assessment to identify wider contextual support mechanisms.

4.4 Special Educational Needs, Disabilities (SEND) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

Where attendance difficulties arise from SEND, mental health needs, anxiety, EBSA, or medical needs, the school is fully committed to working closely with parents, pupils, and external professionals. Together, we will actively identify specific barriers to attendance and agree formal, reasonable adjustments and support plans where appropriate.

4.5 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of our community. Where major religious festivals fall outside of school holidays and are recognised by a relevant religious authority, the school will consider authorising the special leave, provided advance notice is given by parents.

4.6 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

In accordance with Section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996, the school will authorise absences for mobile children from GRT communities where the parent is traveling for legitimate business/trade and the child has achieved at least 200 attendances within the preceding 12 months.

This applies only when the family has no fixed abode. If the family is residing at their base school area, or if they can residential travel back to [insert school name here] (defined as the base school where they have registered within the last 18 months), full-time attendance is expected. Parents must communicate traveling schedules and estimated return dates explicitly before departure.

5. Our Procedures

5.1 Register Keeping and Recording

Registers are a legal requirement and are taken twice daily: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register records whether a pupil is present, absent, participating in an approved off-site educational activity, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

5.2 Expected absence procedure for parents

If a child is unavoidably absent, parents must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.15am when the register closes on extension1.
- State the child's full name, class, and specific reason for absence.
- Contact the school on every subsequent morning of absence before 9.15am.

If a child is missing at registration and no parent contact has been made, the school will initiate first-day calling protocols. If phone calls, texts, and emergency contact routes fail, a home visit may be conducted to safeguard the child. Social workers or youth justice officers will be notified of unexplained absences or deletions from the register where relevant.

5.3 Late Arrival at School

Punctuality is vital. The school day begins at 8.45am and the morning register is taken at 8.55am.

- Pupils arriving after the register opens but before it closes at 9.15am will receive an L code (Late before close of register). Parents must accompany them to the main office to sign the late book.
- Pupils arriving after the register officially closes at 9.15am will receive a U code (Late after close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the entire morning session and can trigger penalty notices or legal interventions if it becomes a persistent problem.

5.4 Support Systems

We recognise that poor attendance can signal underlying difficulties at home or school. Support offered to families will always be child-centred, planned in collaborative agreement with parents, and exhausted before enforcement pathways are taken.

Available supportive mechanisms include:

- Staged attendance concern notification letters.
- Personalised Action Plans or formal Attendance Contracts.
- Initiating Early Help Assessments (EHA) or internal pastoral support.
- Inclusion reviews, SEND interventions, and reasonable adjustments.
- Collaborative referrals to external multi-agency support services or local authorities.

5.5 Attendance Rewards & Interventions

At St Francis CE Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that every pupil attends school regularly and on time. We recognise that good attendance is fundamental to pupils' educational achievement, wellbeing, and safeguarding.

A. Monitoring Intervals and Data Tracking

Attendance data is strictly reviewed by the Senior Attendance Champion and Attendance Officer across defined daily, weekly, half-termly, and termly monitoring intervals. The school will dynamically track overall whole-school patterns, cohort metrics, and specific class trends, paying explicit attention to vulnerable subgroups including pupils with SEND, children with a social worker, and those managing medical conditions. This regular oversight ensures that tracking alerts are triggered immediately when a decline becomes visible.

B. Attendance Thresholds and Escalating Interventions

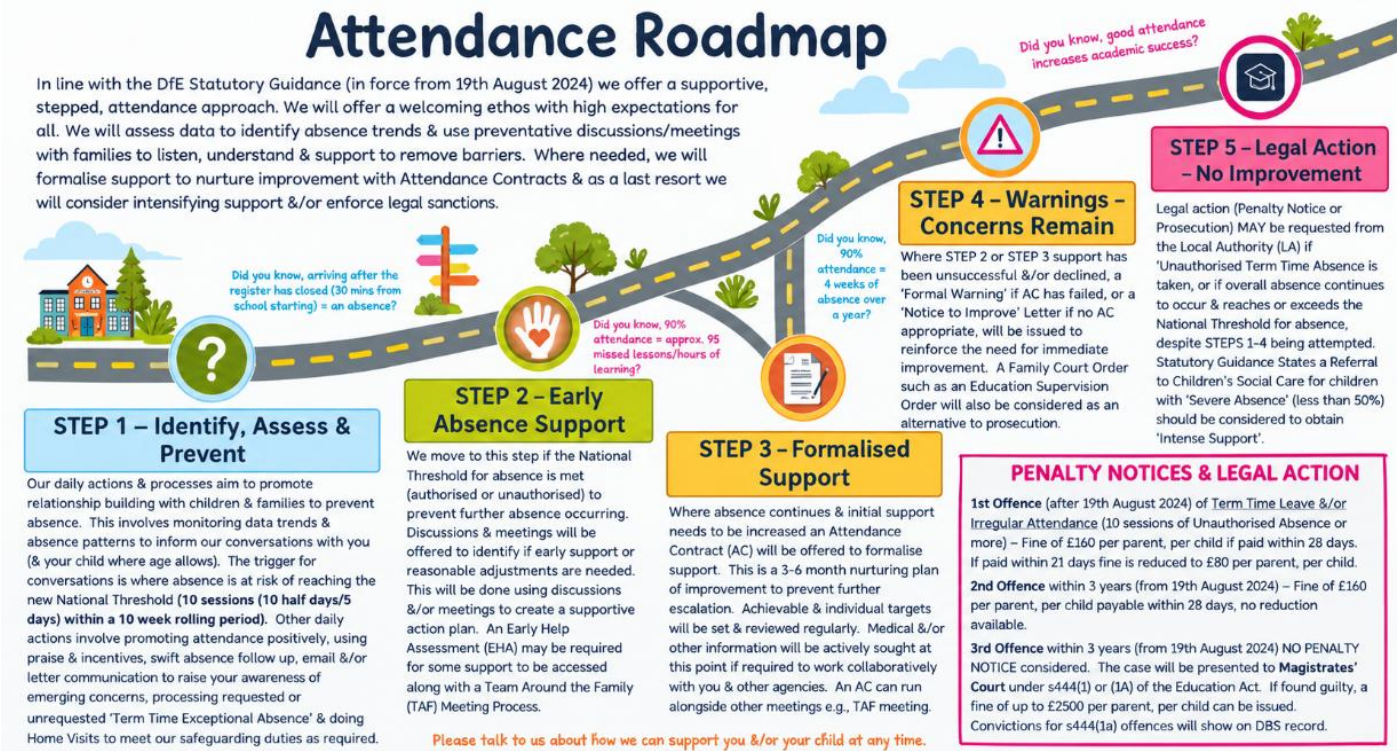
The school expects all pupils to maintain an overall attendance level of at least 96%. To ensure operational clarity, our framework defines the following clear attendance thresholds alongside corresponding intervention steps:

- **96% and Above (Expected Attendance Threshold):** The pupil is meeting the school target. Attendance habits are maintained and celebrated naturally through standard whole-school reinforcement pathways.
- **95% to 90% (Emerging Attendance Concern Threshold):** The student's attendance falls into our amber tracking band. Individual patterns are actively monitored by the attendance champion, informal supportive discussions are initiated with parents, and early intervention pathways are explored.
- **Below 90% (Persistent Absence - PA Threshold):** The student triggers a formal persistent absence alert. The school accelerates intervention by mandating formal attendance review meetings, implementing structured attendance contracts or action plans, exploring Early Help Assessments (EHA), and initiating local authority consultation.
- **Below 50% (Severe Absence - SA Threshold):** The student enters our highest vulnerability category. The school instantly instigates intensive, multi-agency attendance support frameworks, immediate parental case conferences, and direct strategic interventions in tandem with the Local Authority Attendance Team.

C. Inclusive Attendance Celebration and Rewards

To build a positive culture, the school actively promotes regular attendance through positive reinforcement. This includes weekly class attendance recognition in celebration assemblies, individual milestone certificates, praise communications home, and punctuality incentives. Crucially, the school monitors its reward criteria to ensure that frameworks are deployed appropriately and inclusively, ensuring they do not disadvantage pupils whose attendance is directly impacted by genuine chronic medical conditions, long-term disabilities, or exceptional authorised circumstances.

D. Formal Escalation Pathways



Where attendance continuously declines despite child-centred support plans, parents will be required to attend formal legal panel meetings. A binding attendance contract will be enforced, and cases meeting statutory criteria will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team for consideration under the National Framework for Penalty Notices or further Magistrates' Court prosecution.

5.6 part-time timetables

Schools have a strict statutory duty to provide a full-time education for all pupils. In exceptionally rare circumstances, a temporary, time-limited reduced timetable may be implemented if a pupil's acute individual needs mean full-time learning is temporarily not in their best medical or emotional interest.

Reduced timetables will never be used as a tool to manage behavioural issues, will never be implemented without signed written consent from parents/carers, and must be logged immediately with the Local Authority Attendance Team. They are reviewed regularly in direct partnership with the family.

5.7 National Framework for Penalty Notices

A single consistent national threshold dictates when a penalty notice fine must be considered across England: 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period.

These do not have to be consecutive and can span different terms or academic years.

- **First Offence:** A Penalty Notice fine of £160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- **Second Offence (within 3 years):** A flat fine of £160 per parent, per child, with no early payment discount option.

- **Third Offence:** The case is bypassed directly to the Magistrates' Court for criminal prosecution under the Education Act 1996, resulting in fines up to £2,500, a potential 3-month prison sentence, and a permanent criminal record.

There is no right in law for parents to remove children from school for holidays, recreation, or protest activity during term time.

6. Deletions from the Register

Students will only be removed from the school roll in absolute accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations. The school will collaborate with families to secure details of the child's new address and destination school prior to deletion to minimise the risks of children falling out of education.

The school will report all removals to the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) Team no later than the day of removal. If a parent elects to Elective Home Educate (EHE), a formal written notification of intent must be submitted to the school before the child can be de-registered. (Exception: If a child is on the roll of a designated special school, explicit permission from the Local Authority is required before the school can process de-registration for home education).

7. Related Policies

This policy functions alongside our wider school framework and must be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Suspensions and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies
- Teaching and Learning Strategy

8. Statutory Framework

This policy is strictly built upon the following updated statutory directives and primary legislation:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE (August 2024)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Children missing education, DfE (August 2024)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2024)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (December 2023)

9. Appendices

The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

Appendix 1: Local Authority Documentation

The full document STATUTORY CODE OF PRACTICE - The County Attendance Team Children Education and Families Directorate, can be found at https://schools.oxfordshire.gov Summary below;

This document outlines the statutory code of practice for issuing penalty notices for unauthorized school absences in Oxfordshire.

Purpose and Legal Basis
The local code aims to ensure fair and consistent issuance of penalty notices for school absences, adhering to the Department for Education's guidelines.
Penalty notices serve as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under the Education Act 1996, applicable to pupils of compulsory school age in various educational settings.
Only authorized officers, including headteachers and local authority officers, can issue penalty notices.

Rationale for Penalty Notices

- Research indicates a correlation between school attendance and academic achievement, with lower absence rates linked to higher attainment levels.
- Regular attendance is crucial for vulnerable pupils, providing opportunities for support and intervention.
- A supportive approach is preferred, with legal enforcement as a last resort, aimed at addressing barriers to attendance.

Criteria for Issuing Penalty Notices

- Penalty notices may be issued when a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorized absence within 10 school weeks, using specific absence codes.
- Notices can also be issued during truancy sweeps or if a pupil is found in a public place during school hours without justification.
- The local authority retains discretion to issue notices before the threshold is met if deemed appropriate.

Considerations Before Issuance

- Each case is evaluated to determine if a penalty notice is the best tool for improving attendance, considering previous support provided and compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- A Notice to Improve may be issued as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support before a penalty notice is considered.

Procedure for Issuing and Withdrawing Notices

- The County Attendance Team is responsible for issuing penalty notices, which must be sent by first-class post.
- Notices can only be withdrawn under specific circumstances, such as errors or improper issuance.
- Timely payment of a penalty notice prevents further prosecution for the same offence, with penalties set at £80 or £160 depending on payment timing.

Conclusion

- The document emphasizes a structured approach to managing school attendance, balancing enforcement with support, and ensuring consistent application of penalty notices across Oxfordshire.

Appendix 2: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

Target: We expect all pupils to attend school every day that they can across the school year to maximise achievement.

Morning Deadline: Pupils must be inside their designated entry area on site by 8.45am. Arriving after registration closes results in an unauthorised absence code (U).

Reporting Absences: Call the school line or use the authorised messaging app before [insert time, e.g., 8:20am] on every day of absence. State your child's name, year, and a specific medical reason.

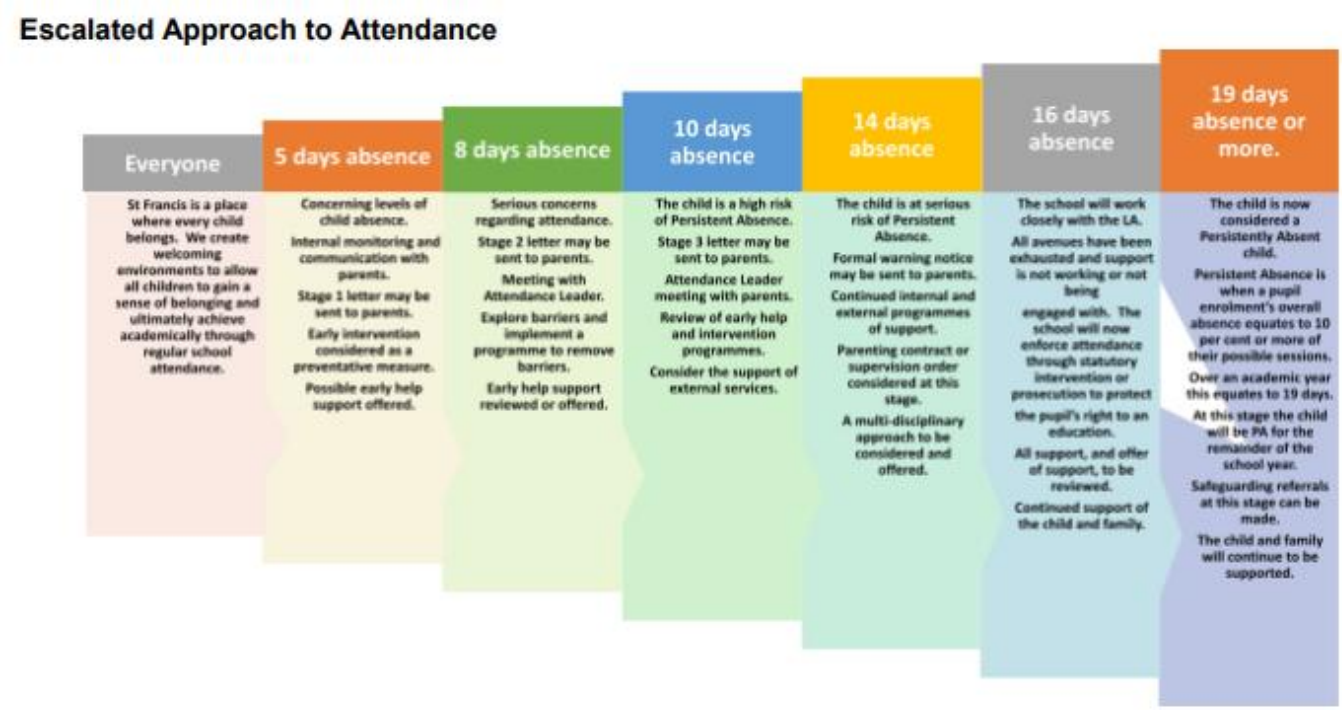
Appointments: Book routine medical/dental checkups strictly outside of school hours or late in the afternoon. Provide an official appointment card/letter to the office to verify absence.

Exceptional Leave: Apply in writing via [insert school email] at least a month prior to any requested exceptional leave. Term-time holidays or leisure trips are explicitly unauthorised.

Attendance Contact Directory

Day-to-Day Attendance Reporting Contact: Susan Hooker (Mon-Thurs), Rachel Hinton (Fri), 01865 468190, susan.hooker@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk, office@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk

Contact about daily notifications, casual sickness alerts, and morning registration queries.

Detailed/Targeted Attendance Support Specialist: Sue Hooker Susan.hooker@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk
Contact for structural advice, personalised action plans, Early Help coordination, or SEND/EBSA discussions.

Strategic Senior Attendance Champion: Fleur Belcher and Simon Bushell headteacher@st-francis.oxon.sch.uk
Contact for overarching strategic concerns, policy adoption, and formal Local Authority escalation pathways.