



St Francis Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Love: for God, each other, our learning, and the world.

Attendance Policy

Policy drawn up by Headteacher and Agreed by Staff and Governors

Date August 2024

Version No	Date	Change/Review
V1.0	June 2014	Adopted
V1.1	March 2015	Review
V1.2	Sept 2015	Ratfied
V1.3	April 2017	Review
V1.3	April 2019	Review
V2.0	March 2023	Policy redrafted and adopted
V2.1	February 2024	Reviewed and ratified
V2.2	August 2024	Review
V2.3	March 2026	Reviewed and ratified

Policy: Attendance

Version	Date	Description of changes and person/organisation responsible
V2.3	March 2026	Reviewed by Claire McLaughlin. Formatting and slight changes to monitoring

1. Aims and scope of this Policy

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Improving the overall percentage attendance and reducing unauthorised absence.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Attendance is the responsibility of all.

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families .

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is, Claire McLaughlin, Assistant Headteacher.

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Following up unaccounted for absences from 9:15am
- The attendance administrator is Lisa Allen.

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 by closing (saving) the register at 8:55am.

School office staff

The school's office staff:

- Take calls from parents, receive messages through the PA Connect app system and emails through the attendance email address about absence on a day-to-day basis and record the information onto the computer system (SIMS) each day
- Refer calls/emails from parents to the SLT in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers attending an induction meeting with the Head Teacher, for new children and transferring from Nursery to Reception, are given an outline of the school's attendance policy and related expectations. At the beginning of each school year, parents/carers are reminded of the importance of good attendance and the possible consequences of poor attendance, in the school newsletter/website. Parents/carers are annually requested to sign a Home/School

Agreement, which includes a commitment to ensure their child attends regularly and on time, conforming to the school attendance policy.

Parents/carers receive attendance information on annual reports and, where attendance is an issue, they will receive Letter 1 (*see Appendix One – School Attendance Intervention Model).

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day and confirm dates and times of appointments in advance with the school office.
- Provide necessary documentation e.g. Hospital appointment letters to support absence requests.
- Apply as far in advance as possible of any requested absences.

Pupils are expected to:

Attend school every day on time arriving shortly before 8:50am to begin learning at 8:50am

4. Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark 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.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made .
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See Appendix 2 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive shortly before 8:50am as learning begins at 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50 and will be kept open until 9:15. Teachers will save the register at 8:55am; the office will keep the register open until 9:30am.

Pupils arriving after 8:55am but before 9:30am will be marked as late code L.

Pupils arriving after 9:30am will be registered as unauthorised absence code U unless a satisfactory reason is given.

The register for the afternoon session will be taken as soon as the children arrive in the classroom after lunch break.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible. This can be done by:

- Calling the school office absence line.
- Sending a message through the PA Connect app under 'Absence Reporting'.
- Emailing attendance@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer 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.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Please inform us by sending a message through the PA Connect app under 'Leave of absence' or emailing attendance@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk. Evidence of appointment should be uploaded on the PA Connect App.

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.

Children should be in school prior to and following any appointments or external examinations. All timings are logged. The parent/carer is required to sign the child in/out of school on the Inventory screen in the office foyer.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 explains which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code 'L'
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code 'U'

The parent/carer is required to sign the child in school on the Inventory screen in the office foyer.

If punctuality issues are ongoing, class teachers will speak to parents/carers to identify the issue and offer support.

Should there be no improvement in punctuality, Senior Leadership Team will also offer support.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a house visit, call the Education Welfare Officer, inform Social Care or call the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- If still no reason for absence, Letter 'N' will be sent to ascertain the reason and updated if reason given has changed, otherwise mark as 'O' unauthorised. (See Appendix One)
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

Children missing in Education (CME)

We fulfill our duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school, a child who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. If a Looked After child or a child subject to a Child Protection plan goes missing we will refer them to social services within 48 hours. We also consider making a referral for any children being withdrawn from school with intent to be electively home educated where there are safeguarding concerns. We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues schools must be vigilant about. Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this will be referred to local authority social care. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police will be informed. Where there is a concern that a child's safety or well-being is at risk, the school will take action without delay.

Reporting to Parents/carers

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at the end of the academic year within their pupil's annual report. During the year, where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance or punctuality, staff will share attendance figure to date. Parents may request information about their child's attendance and may check the information is accurate.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a situation that cannot otherwise be avoided.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, in advance of at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via PA Connect app 'Leave of absence' form. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- External examinations e.g. dancing
- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Visiting a new school.
- Funeral of a close family member.

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school for a holiday or other absence. This is especially important where a request is made late, giving the school insufficient time to consider the request and respond in writing.

Holidays during term time

Holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods.

Reminders about holidays in term time are published in school newsletters. Term dates are published in advance on the school website. The school selects an additional 5 days for training, called INSET day. Regular reminders of term dates, INSET days and the importance of regular attendance are given via regular school newsletters.

Schools must comply with DfE requirements and may authorise term time holidays only if there are exceptional circumstances which indicate that is appropriate to do so.

Applications to take a holiday during term time will be considered on an individual basis and should be applied for in writing addressed to the Head Teacher

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The school should consider next steps once 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence happens in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Unauthorised absence means any absence from school which has not been agreed by the school or when parents have **not** provided any explanation.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session and can be across school terms or academic years. This can be any form of unauthorised absence including arriving late after closure of the register and days of unauthorised absence which add up to 10 half days or 5 full days within a 10-week period.

Once the threshold has been met the school will consider whether support may be appropriate to help your child to attend school. We would like to encourage all parents to continue to work with schools if attendance is becoming a concern. However, when schools and councils believe that they have exhausted all offers of support, and a parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school a penalty notice may be issued.

Penalty notices are issued to parents/carers of statutory school age children only. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. This may include parents who do not live with the child. Please note that in education law this responsibility can extend to step-parents or other adults who live in the same place as the child.

Penalty notices will be issued to **each** parent for **each** child of statutory school age. So, for example two parents of two children will receive four penalty notices.

In all circumstances, the maximum number of penalty notices that can be issued will be **two** penalty notices **per parent per child in a rolling three-year period**.

The new regulations come into force on 19 August 2024 and will apply to unauthorised absence from the beginning of the autumn term 2024. Any penalty notices that might be issued in the future which relate to unauthorised absence taken during the academic year 2023/2024 will **not** be counted as part of the two penalty notices within three years regulation.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Each year the school sets an overall attendance target.

An on-going target for unauthorised absence is that it is kept well below the national average .

Success against whole school targets will be measured using the DfE census information.

The school will liaise with families where a child's attendance is falling or of concern.

The school will send regular newsletters to parents to promote the importance of good attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Discuss termly the attendance of children with persistent/severe attendance/lateness and those on the safeguarding/welfare register (See Appendix 1 for Intervention model)

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Monitor attendance on a regular basis.
- Provide access to wider support services, such as the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer EWO, to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Issue letters from the EWO advising them of the possible next legal steps.
- Possibly open Early Help and/or make a referral to Children's Social Care.

Consequences of unauthorised absence

Absence Enquiry Service

Education Welfare Service provides a service that enables schools to request an Absence Enquiry to be carried out in the cases where a child fails to attend school regularly.

Absences could include holidays where no authorisation has been granted by the school or absences for which the school have not been provided with sufficient evidence to authorise the absence, for example, medical evidence.

Once an absence enquiry has been received from a school, the Local Authority will generally issue a fixed penalty notice fine for holidays taken in term time. If this is not paid within 28 days, a Police and Criminal Evidence Questionnaire will be sent out to you giving you the opportunity to give evidence under caution.

Once all the evidence has been collated, the Local Authority will decide the outcome of the enquiry.

This could include:

- no further action
- a warning letter
- a caution
- prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence (Section 444(1) Education Act 1996).

For more information about the process see frequently asked questions or contact absenceenquiry@swindon.gov.uk.

A Fixed Penalty Notice

This entails a fine of £80 per parent/carer, per child where the child resides with either both parents; the parents live separately, step-parents or other adult carers in the household. The fine is payable within 21 days. Failure to

pay this in time will result in the fine rising to £160 per parent per child. A Penalty Notice is issued in circumstances where it is appropriate to prosecute but the parents are given the opportunity to pay a Penalty Notice so as to avoid prosecution and having a criminal conviction against them. If there are factors that mean it is not appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice, for examples, when previous Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued, the Local Authority can consider this an aggravated offence and a court hearing might be more appropriate. This usually carries a higher fine. (see Appendix Three)

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board

.

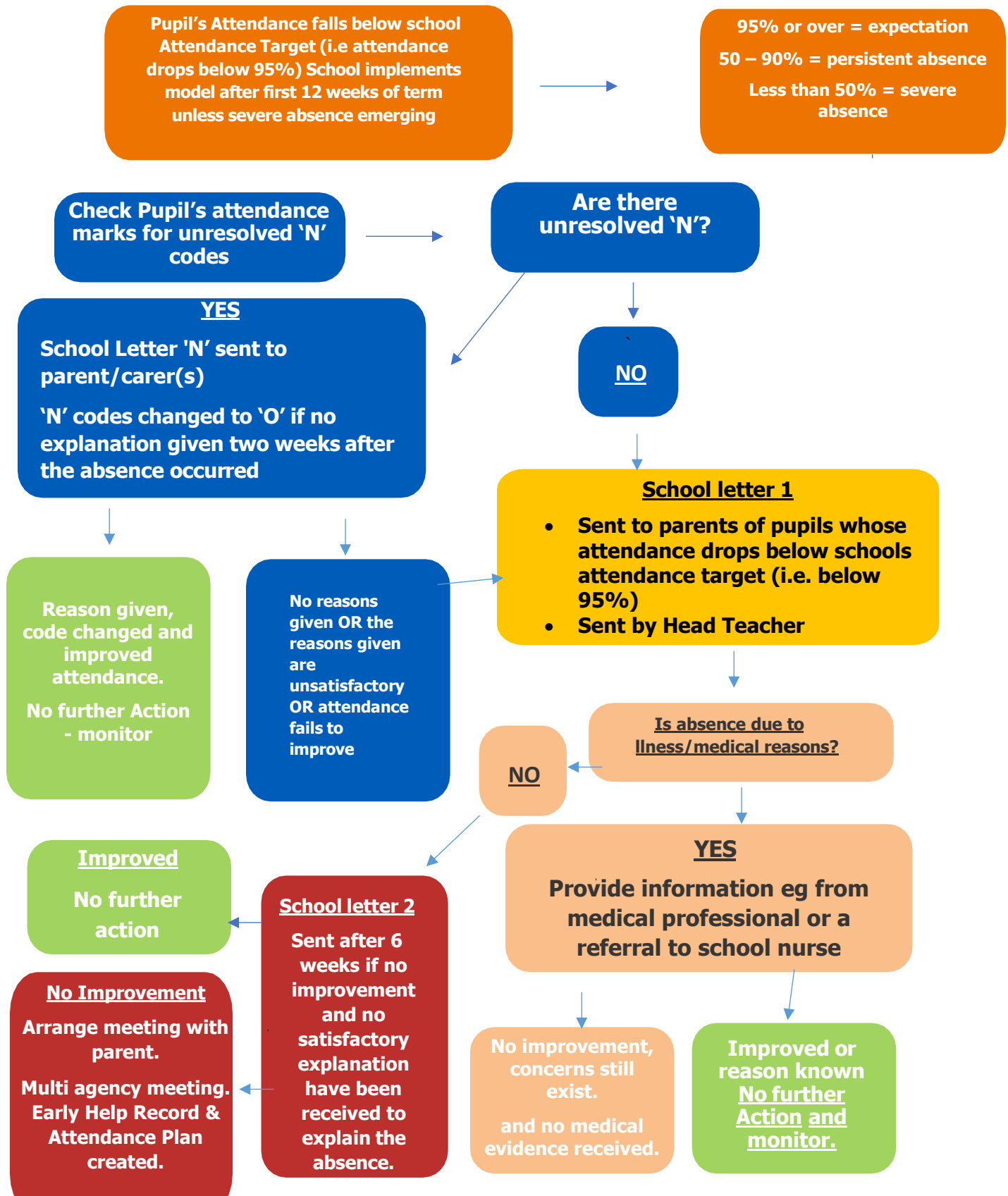
9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix One

School Attendance Intervention Model



Appendix Two: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance (applies from 19th August 2024)

CODE	REASON	
Attending the school		
/ \	Present at the school	No change
/	Morning session	No change
\	Afternoon session	No change
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	Change in details
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	New reason/code
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Change in details
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Change in details
W	Attending work experience	Change in details
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Change in details
D	Dual registered at another school	Change in details
Absent - leave of absence		
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Previously C code
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	No change
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Previously J code
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	No change
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	No change
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	Previously C code
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	No Change
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Change in details
R	Religious observance	No change
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Change in details
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Change in details
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		

Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	New reason/code
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Previously Y code
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Previously Y code
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	New reason/code
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Previously Y code
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	Previously Y code
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	New reason/code
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Previously Y code
Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	No change
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Change in details
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Change in details
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	No change
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Change in details
#	Planned whole school closure	Change in detail

Appendix 3 - Swindon Borough Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.



Rationale

Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is both a legal requirement and essential in order for students to maximise the opportunities available to them. Swindon Education Welfare will continue to investigate cases of regular non-attendance from school and, following appropriate casework, instigate legal action if applicable.

Regular attendance is in accordance with the rules prescribed by each school.

Under Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 and Section 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Local Authorities are able to issue a Penalty Notice for certain cases of absence from school.

A Penalty Notice will involve the recipient paying a fine of £80.00 if paid within 21 days rising to

£160.00 if paid between 22 and 28 days. A Notice served by first class post is deemed to have been received on the second working day after posting.

In order to comply with Human Rights legislation it is essential that Penalty Notices be issued in a consistent manner. This Code of Conduct will govern the issuing of Penalty Notices for Swindon Borough Council.

Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices

In Swindon, Penalty Notices will be issued by the Lead Officer for Legal Processes, Education Welfare. The Lead Officer will ensure that the issuing of Penalty Notices is closely monitored with recipients paying the relevant fine. In cases where the penalty is not paid within the appropriate period, Swindon Borough Council will instigate action through the courts as required by legislation.

For any person to be prosecuted the elements of s444 must be proven, the service cannot prosecute just because a notice has not been paid. The Rules of Evidence and Criminal Procedural Rules apply, any prosecution must meet the 'evidence test' and the 'public interest test' and must be proportionate otherwise a prosecution may not proceed. This will be in conjunction with Swindon Borough Councils Enforcement Policy.

The maximum number of Penalty Notices which can be issued to one parent for an individual child is three in any 12 month period.

Education Welfare will receive requests to issue Penalty Notices from the Head Teachers of Schools/Colleges/Academies in Swindon, the Wiltshire Constabulary and neighbouring LAs. Education Welfare will action these requests providing that the relevant information is supplied in the specified manner, and that the circumstances of the unauthorised absence from School/College/Academy match those detailed in this Code of Conduct.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice will be issued

The issuing of Penalty Notices is considered appropriate:

1. In cases of absence from School/College/Academy when the pupil has been taken on a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

In such a case, each parent will receive a separate Penalty Notice for each child taken out of school and each will be responsible for the payment of that Notice.

Should a parent fail or refuse to pay any Penalty Notice issued for this reason, then the evidence provided by the School/College/Academy will be the only information laid before the court. There will be no automatic Education Welfare Officer involvement.

2. Following a Truancy Watch Patrol enquiries will be undertaken with the School/College/Academy of any pupil stopped. In cases where the School/College/Academy has recorded the absence of the pupil as unauthorised then a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Penalty Notices will not be issued during Truancy Patrols as further investigation may be required in order to obtain all the relevant evidence to prove the offence.

3. In the early stages of casework, a School/College/Academy might form an opinion that the issuing of a Penalty Notice is appropriate, e.g. in cases where a parent continually fails to provide an explanation for a pupil's absence in accordance with the school's procedures, and remains at an unacceptable level. This could include late arrival after

registration has closed.

4. Following notification from a School/College/Academy to the LA that a pupil has had an unauthorised absence from School/College/Academy, the circumstances of which appear to have been totally avoidable (*e.g. too tired after a late night, a birthday treat, family friends/relatives visiting, shopping*).

5. Following a referral from the Wiltshire Constabulary, procedures as at (2) above will be followed.

6. When a child is found to be in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion from school. (Section 103 and 105 Education and Inspections Act 2006). Reasonable justification may include a pre-arranged medical appointment or a medical emergency

Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice may be withdrawn by Swindon LA in any case in which the authority determines that:

- a) it ought not to have been issued – i.e. it was issued outside the terms of the Code of Conduct; or where no offence has been committed; or
- b) it has been issued to the wrong person; or
- c) it is materially defective

Where a Penalty Notice has been withdrawn in accordance with the above, a notice of the withdrawal shall be given to the recipient and any amount paid by way of penalty in pursuance of that notice shall be repaid to the person who paid it. No proceedings shall be continued or instituted against the recipient for the offence in connection with which the withdrawn notice was issued or for an offence under s.444(1A) of the Act arising out of the same circumstances.

Payment of Penalty Notices

The arrangements for the paying of penalties will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

There is no mechanism within either legislation or this code for the collection of non-payment neither is there an opportunity or pay in instalments and there is no right of appeal to the notice. Non- payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice must result in prosecution to be **considered** of that person under the Education Act 1996.

Appendix 4 – Introductory letter for Attendance

September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE PROCEDURES

All maintained schools have a responsibility to provide 190 days of planned education per child each year. It is a parent/carer's legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school. The DFE have released guidance about this, and Swindon Borough Council have attendance and absence as their focus strategy currently.

With this in mind, our attendance and absence procedures have been aligned to follow these documents. As a result, we need to collect more precise information about children's attendance levels, foresee any potential difficulties and, in the long-term, liaise with parents to create plans to improve attendance where it falls below that which is expected.

1. If your child is absent from school due to illness, please contact the school by **9.00am** on the **first day of absence**. This should be done by telephone call to the office absence line, a message sent through the PA Connect app or an email sent to attendance@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk address outlining the reason for the absence.

Please give more details other than just unwell or poorly. For example, cold with a temperature, sickness & diarrhoea, Scarlet fever, Covid etc. See Attendance Procedure attached.

2. It is important that you notify us via call, PA Connect or email for **each subsequent day** your child is absent, again with the **precise reason**.

If a telephone call or other correspondence is not received, office staff will call you. If they are unable to contact you, they may call your given emergency contacts (in order of priority) to establish why your child is not in school.

3. If an absence **is five school days or longer**, **written confirmation** is required upon your child's return to school together with copies of **relevant medical documentation**.

We encourage parents/carers to make **medical and dental appointments outside of school hours** but understand that this is not always possible. Should your child need to be out of school for this reason, or for music, dance or sporting examinations, a **written notification** is required by the office **in advance**. The full Attendance Policy can be found on the school website.

Please be advised that **any** absence, may be referred to the Welfare Officer from Swindon Borough Council. This step is taken when overall attendance has fallen below accepted levels or absence is requested beyond that which meets criteria. (Section 5 of the Policy)

For your information the impact of absence on learning can be seen in the table below.

Absence from School and the Impact on Learning

Attendance during one school year	Equals – days absent	Which is approximately weeks absent	Which means this number of sessions missed
100%	0 days	0 weeks	0 sessions
95%	10 days	2 weeks	20 sessions
90%	19 days	4 weeks	38 sessions
80%	38 days	8 weeks	76 sessions
50%	95 days	19 weeks	190 sessions

The Department for Education (DfE) has introduced some new guidance for schools and local councils for managing school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notices (fines) in relation to school non-attendance and have amended the law. These changes came into effect from 19th August 2024 and all schools and councils across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance.

WHAT IS A PENALTY NOTICE?

A penalty notice allows parents to discharge an offence in relation to school non-attendance, by paying a one-off penalty without the matter being referred to court where they could receive fines of hundreds of pounds and a criminal record.

WHEN CAN A PENALTY NOTICE BE USED?

A school should consider next steps once 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence happens in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Unauthorised absence means any absence from school which has not been agreed by the school or when parents have **not** provided any explanation.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session and can be across school terms or academic years. This can be any form of unauthorised absence including arriving late after closure of the register and days of unauthorised absence which add up to 10 half days or 5 full days within a 10-week period.

Once the threshold has been met the school will consider whether support may be appropriate to help your child to attend school. We would like to encourage all parents to continue to work with schools if attendance is becoming a concern. However, when schools and councils believe that they have exhausted all offers of support, and a parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school a penalty notice may be issued.

CAN I HAVE A HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME?

Pupils should not be taken out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. The guidance is clear that headteachers should not be considering a holiday as an exceptional circumstance.

If a request for leave for the purposes of a holiday is declined and the pupil is absent for 5 days or more then the school is expected to notify Swindon Borough Council. We will issue a penalty notice with no requirement for any support to be offered as specified in the statutory guidance. In every case, the notification for the penalty notice comes in from the school to Swindon Borough Council for the process to be completed. Penalty notices can also be issued where a pupil is absent for repeated incidents of unauthorised leave(holiday) in term time that fall below the 5-day threshold.

WHO CAN RECEIVE A PENALTY NOTICE?

Penalty notices are issued to parents/carers of statutory school age children only. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. This may include parents who do not live with the child. Please note that in education law this responsibility can extend to step-parents or other adults who live in the same place as the child.

Penalty notices will be issued to **each** parent for **each** child of statutory school age. So, for example two parents of two children will receive four penalty notices.

IS THERE A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF PENALTY NOTICES I MIGHT GET?

In all circumstances, the maximum number of penalty notices that can be issued will be **two** penalty notices **per parent per child in a rolling three-year period**.

The new regulations come into force on 19 August 2024 and will apply to unauthorised absence from the beginning of the autumn term 2024.

Any penalty notices that might be issued in the future which relate to unauthorised absence taken during the academic year 2023/2024 will **not** be counted as part of the two penalty notices within three years regulation.

HOW MUCH WILL THE PENALTY NOTICE BE?

FIRST OFFENCE PENALTY NOTICE

£160 per parent per child

Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days

SECOND OFFENCE PENALTY NOTICE (within 3 years)

£160 per parent per child paid within 28 days

THIRD OFFENCE AND FURTHER OFFENCES (within 3 years)

The third or subsequent time an offence is committed for unauthorised absence Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Swindon Borough Council has published an updated code of conduct for penalty notices and all the necessary updated information. This can be found on the Swindon Borough Council website.

Yours sincerely

Hester Millsop
Headteacher

Appendix 5 Letter 1

Absences from school

I am writing to highlight **XX'S** current attendance percentage for this school year so far.

Our target figure for how often a pupil should be present is 95%. This is a standard set in line with the Government's expectations based on historical data that shows how much better, on average, pupils achieve with attendance at or above this figure. At present, **XX'S** attendance for this academic year is **XX%** which is some way below our expectations.

In September 2015, the Government announced that any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% is classed as a persistent absentee, regardless of whether the absence has been authorised or not. **XX'S** current attendance is currently close to this threshold. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on **his/her** academic achievement and as such we may have to refer the absence to the LA.

At St Francis, we believe that very good attendance is one of the most important ways of ensuring that your child will achieve both their academic and personal potential. Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment. We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

While we support **XX'S** staying home if seriously ill or with a contagious illness, we would like to encourage you to make sure that they do attend if they are able to.

Thank you in advance for support in improving **XX'S** attendance. Please try to limit the amount of time that your child misses school due to medical appointments or illness. If possible, avoid scheduling doctor's appointments during the school day and schedule family events with your child's school schedule in mind; planning celebrations or family trips during weekends or school holidays.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the school if you want to discuss **XX'S** attendance further or if we can help in any way. It may be that we can offer support by referring to the school Nurse and or our Parent Support Worker.

Yours sincerely

Mrs H Millsop
Headteacher