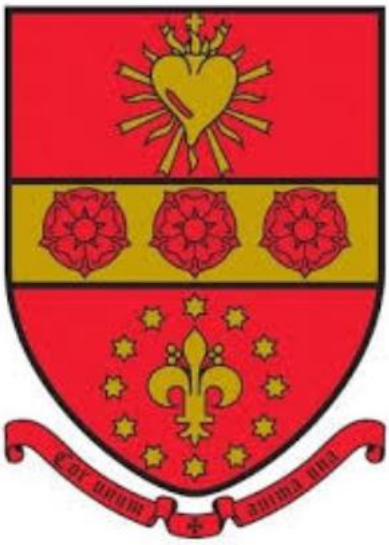

Attendance Policy

St. Francis' College

September 2026

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1 Aims

1.1 This is the attendance policy of St. Francis' College.

1.2 The policy sets out the School's approach to promoting and securing regular attendance and punctuality, and has been adapted to reflect the School's age range, operating arrangements and local authority procedures.

1.3 The aims of the policy are as follows:

1.3.1 to actively promote regular attendance, which is an important part of safeguarding, welfare, attainment and wider development;

1.3.2 to work in partnership with pupils, parents and carers, the local authority and other relevant partners to identify and remove barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity.

2 Scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all pupils on the School's admission register, including pupils below compulsory school age where they are registered pupils of the School. Except where all pupils are boarders, attendance must be recorded for every registered pupil, regardless of age.

2.2 For children in the EYFS, the relevant statutory attendance and registration requirements will be applied according to their age and circumstances. The School will monitor the attendance of all Early Years children as part of its safeguarding and welfare arrangements.

2.3 This policy is designed to address the specific obligations on the School to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3 Regulatory framework

3.1 This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:

3.1.1 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended in 2026);

3.1.2 Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, July 2026);

3.1.3 Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026);

3.1.4 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;

3.1.5 Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025;

3.1.6 Equality Act 2010.

3.2 This policy has regard to the following additional guidance and advice:

3.2.1 Keeping children safe in education (DfE, September 2026) (**KCSIE**);

3.2.2 Children missing education (DfE, September 2025).

3.3 School policies and procedures may be relevant to this policy, including but not limited to:

3.3.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding policy (including children missing education);

3.3.2 Behaviour and discipline policy;

3.3.3 Admissions policy;

3.3.4 Policy on special educational needs and learning difficulties;

3.3.5 Exclusion and withdrawal review policy.

4 Publication and availability

4.1 This policy is published on the School website, and is available in hard copy from the School office on request, or can be sent by email.

4.2 Parents/carers will be informed of the policy when a pupil joins the School, and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when significant updates are made.

4.3 The School will communicate clearly who parents and pupils should contact about day-to-day attendance matters and who can provide more detailed attendance support.

4.4 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

5 Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

5.1 The Proprietor and Governing body are responsible for:

5.1.1 promoting the importance of regular attendance, and ensuring that school leaders fulfil applicable statutory duties and DfE expectations.

5.2 The Head and Senior Attendance champion are responsible for:

5.2.1 Setting a clear vision for maintaining and improving attendance and ensuring effective systems are consistently followed;
5.2.2 Ensuring that staff understand their attendance responsibilities and receive appropriate training;
5.2.3 Monitoring attendance and absence data, evaluating the impact of strategies and targeting support where it is most needed;
5.2.4 Working with the DSL, SEND and pastoral staff, the local authority and other agencies where attendance concerns overlap with safeguarding, health, SEND or wider family needs.

5.3 All staff have a role in promoting good attendance, accurately following registration procedures, identifying emerging concerns and passing relevant information promptly to the appropriate attendance, pastoral or safeguarding lead.

5.4 Teaching staff are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the School system and the correct codes, in line with agreed procedures.

5.5 School administrative staff will normally take calls or receive emails from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record details on the School system. They will also follow up on any unknown absences.

5.6 Parents and carers are expected to ensure that pupils attend regularly and punctually, notify the School promptly of absence and its reason, provide information reasonably requested by the School, and work with the School and relevant services where support is needed.

5.7 To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Proprietor has allocated the following specific tasks:

Task	**Allocated to**	**When / frequency of review**
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Deputy Head Pastoral	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy, relevant risk assessments and any action taken in response and evaluating effectiveness	Deputy Head Pastoral	As required, and at least annually
Maintaining up to date records of all information created in relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the GDPR	Deputy Head Pastoral	As required, and at least annually
Formal review	Proprietor	As required, and at least once every two years

6 Attendance expectations

6.1 The School has high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and expects pupils to attend every session for the full duration of that session unless there is a statutory or otherwise properly authorised reason for absence.

6.2 The School may use 96% as an internal aspirational benchmark, but this is not a statutory attendance threshold and decisions about support or intervention will not be based on a single headline percentage alone.

6.3 For national statistical purposes, a pupil is persistently absent where they miss 10% or more of possible sessions and severely absent where they miss 50% or more. The School will intervene earlier where patterns, changes or individual circumstances indicate that support is required.

6.4 Various strategies are used for promoting attendance. These include;

- Monitoring attendance data regularly to identify concerns, trends, or patterns at an early stage.
- Contacting parents/carers promptly when a pupil is absent without explanation.
- Providing targeted support for pupils experiencing barriers to attendance, including emotional, social, medical, or family-related difficulties.
- Offering pastoral support, mentoring, and wellbeing interventions to help pupils feel safe, connected, and engaged in school.
- Ensuring a welcoming and inclusive school environment where all pupils feel a sense of belonging.
- Liaising with external agencies and professionals when additional support is required.
- Following local authority and statutory guidance where attendance concerns persist.

7 Registration procedures

7.1 The School will maintain its admission and attendance registers electronically in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

- The attendance register will be taken at the start of each morning session and once during each afternoon session, at the time determined by the School for that session.
- Where significant timetable arrangements are in place for different groups of pupils, the School will seek to structure those arrangements around common points at which attendance can be recorded for all pupils.
- Staggered arrival arrangements can operate alongside the single registration time, where the gates are opened before the formal start of the school day to support the orderly arrival of pupils.
- The School will record whether each pupil is present and, if not, the reason for absence using the appropriate national attendance or absence code.
- The register will remain open for [insert period] after the start of each session. This period will be the same for every session and will not exceed 30 minutes.
- Where an unexplained absence code is initially used, the correct code will be entered as soon as the reason is established and no later than five working days after the session.
- Any amendment to a register will preserve the original entry and record the amended entry, reason, date and person making the amendment.

8 Types of absence and attendance codes

8.1 The School will use the national attendance and absence codes in accordance with current regulations and DfE guidance. Staff responsible for coding must refer to the current guidance where there is uncertainty and identify the primary reason why the pupil is unable to attend.

8.2 Particular care will be taken with codes relating to approved educational activity, dual registration, part-time timetables, flexi-schooling, pupils with no fixed abode, access

arrangements and circumstances where attendance is not possible. Remote education does not constitute attendance at school: a pupil receiving remote education while absent must still be recorded using the appropriate absence code.

9 Reporting absence

9.1 Parents/carers must notify the School as soon as possible and normally before the start of the school day when a pupil will be absent, giving the reason for absence and, where known, the expected date of return. The School will publish clear arrangements for reporting absence.

9.2 Where absence continues, parents/carers should maintain contact with the School as requested and inform the School of any change in circumstances.

10 First-day response and day-to-day follow-up

10.1 Unexplained absence will be followed up promptly on the same day as both an attendance and safeguarding matter.

- The School will identify unexplained absences for each session and contact parents/carers to establish the reason and expected return date.
- Where appropriate, contact may also be made with foster carers, social workers, youth offending team workers or other relevant professionals.
- If contact cannot be established, the School will consider further reasonable steps in light of the pupil's circumstances and safeguarding risk.
- Where reasonably possible, the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.
- Parents/carers will be kept appropriately informed about attendance concerns in a way that explains the time missed and likely impact, rather than relying solely on headline percentages.

11 Monitoring, analysis and early intervention

11.1 Attendance will be monitored and analysed regularly so that concerns are identified early and support can be targeted before absence becomes entrenched.

- Weekly patterns and trends will be reviewed at individual pupil, cohort and year-group level, including punctuality where appropriate.
- Individual-level analysis will not be limited to pupils already persistently or severely absent; emerging patterns and changes will also trigger consideration of support.
- Half-termly, termly and full-year analysis will consider patterns in attendance codes, days of absence and, where relevant, lesson attendance.
- Where appropriate and meaningful for the School's context, data will be benchmarked against local, regional and national data or comparable schools.
- The School will consider relevant cohorts according to its pupil population. These may include pupils with SEND or disabilities, pupils with a social worker, looked-after pupils, young carers, disadvantaged pupils and other groups whose attendance is lower than that of their peers.
- The impact of attendance strategies and interventions will be monitored and adjusted where necessary.

12 Support-first approach and escalation

12.1 Where a pattern of absence is emerging or established, the School will seek to understand the barriers affecting the pupil and family and work collaboratively to address them. Attendance concerns will not automatically result in punitive action.

12.2 Support may include reasonable adjustments, pastoral or SEND support, mentoring, referrals to external services, early help or a coordinated multi-agency plan. Support will be reviewed with the pupil and family and intensified where absence increases.

12.3 Where voluntary support is not effective or is not engaged with, the School will work with the local authority and other relevant partners as appropriate, where formal intervention may be needed. Any action will be taken in accordance with the current legal framework as applicable for independent schools, DfE guidance and the local authority's arrangements.

13 Safeguarding and children missing education

13.1 Attendance is an important safeguarding indicator. Unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence, or a sudden change in attendance, may indicate welfare or safeguarding concerns. Staff must follow the School's safeguarding procedures and inform the DSL where appropriate.

13.2 The School will comply with its duties concerning Children Missing Education and will make required notifications and returns to the local authority.

13.3 The School will make reasonable enquiries jointly with the local authority to establish the whereabouts of a pupil where required before deleting the pupil's name from the admission register. The School will not delete a pupil from the admission register until the applicable statutory conditions for deletion have been satisfied. Where a pupil cannot be located or there are concerns about their safety, action will be taken promptly in accordance with safeguarding and local authority procedures.

14 Leave of absence

14.1 Requests for leave of absence should be made in advance wherever required or practicable. The Head, or authorised delegate, will consider each request individually, taking account of the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context.

14.2 The School will not operate blanket rules under which leave is automatically granted for particular circumstances or events. A holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation would not generally be regarded by the DfE as an exceptional circumstance.

14.3 Where leave is granted, the School will determine the appropriate period and record the absence using the relevant code.

15 Punctuality

15.1 Pupils are expected to arrive in sufficient time to be ready for the start of the school day and each registration session. Late arrival will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code and patterns of lateness will be monitored and addressed.

15.2 The School will publish its start time, registration time and register closing time. A pupil arriving after the register has closed without an authorised reason will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code.

16 Pupils with medical absences, health needs, SEND or disabilities

16.1 The School will be particularly mindful of pupils whose attendance is affected by physical or mental ill health, SEND or disability. It will work with pupils, parents and relevant professionals to understand barriers, make reasonable adjustments where required and put appropriate support in place.

16.2 Medical evidence for recording illness absence should only be needed in a minority of cases. The School will not operate a blanket rule requiring medical evidence for illness. Reasonable evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness, or where prolonged or repeated illness means evidence would help the School understand the pupil's needs, determine appropriate support or reasonable adjustments, or record absence accurately.

16.3 Where medical evidence is appropriate, the School will be flexible about its form and avoid placing unnecessary pressure on health services.

16.4 The School will make a sickness return to the local authority where a pupil of compulsory school age is recorded as absent using Code I (illness) and the School has reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will be unable to attend because of sickness for at least 15 consecutive school days, or that the pupil's total number of school days missed because of sickness during the current school year, whether consecutive or cumulative, will reach or exceed 15 school days. The School will not wait until 15 school days have elapsed where it is already reasonably apparent that the threshold will be met. Only one sickness return is required for the same continuous period of sickness in a school year. The return will be made as soon as possible once the relevant criteria are met.

17 Remote education and reintegration

17.1 Remote education will not be used as a routine alternative to attendance. Where a pupil is absent and remote education is considered, it should only be used as a last resort, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, and as part of a wider plan to support the pupil's return to school.

17.2 A pupil receiving remote education while absent will remain marked absent using the most appropriate attendance code. The School may separately monitor engagement with remote education.

18 Part-Time timetables and flexi-schooling

18.1 All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests, will be time limited, have a clear plan for review and reintegration, and be agreed with the parent/carer as required.

18.2 Flexi-schooling is distinct from a temporary part-time timetable. The School is not obliged to agree flexi-schooling. Where such an arrangement is agreed, attendance will be coded in accordance with current DfE guidance.

19 Boarders

19.1 For boarding pupils, the School will additionally comply with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

19.2 Boarding staff must know the whereabouts of boarders in their charge, or know how to establish their whereabouts, at all times. Any unexplained absence or missing boarder will be dealt with promptly in accordance with the School's safeguarding and missing pupil procedures, including liaison with the police and other agencies where appropriate.

20 Working with the local authority and other partners

20.1 The School will work collaboratively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and other relevant partners, including through Targeting Support Meetings where applicable, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe or wider support is needed.

20.2 The School will make statutory register notifications and returns to the local authority as required, including relevant new-pupil/deletion, attendance and sickness returns. Independent schools are not required to submit daily attendance data directly to the DfE, but remain subject to applicable statutory information-sharing duties with the local authority.

20.3 Attendance returns will be made to the local authority by agreement and in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations. This includes notifying the local authority of a registered pupil of compulsory school age who is not a boarder and who has been continuously absent for at least 10 school days where the absence has been recorded exclusively using one or more of Codes G, N, O or U.

20.4 The School will also make returns in respect of pupils who have failed to attend regularly, in accordance with the Regulations and arrangements agreed with the local authority.

21 Risk assessment

21.1 Where a concern about a pupil's attendance is identified, the risks to that pupil's welfare will be assessed and appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risks identified.

21.2 The format of risk assessment may vary and may be included as part of the School's overall response to a welfare issue, including the use of individual pupil welfare plans (such as behaviour, healthcare and education plans, as appropriate). Regardless of the form used, the School's approach to promoting pupil attendance and welfare will be systematic and pupil focused.

21.3 The Head and Senior Attendance Champion have overall responsibility for ensuring that matters which affect pupil attendance are adequately risk assessed and for ensuring that the relevant findings are implemented, monitored and evaluated.

22 Record keeping and data protection

22.1 Attendance and admission registers are legal records. Every entry will be preserved for six years from the date on which the data was entered.

22.2 Attendance information and records of interventions, communications and support will be retained securely in accordance with the School's data protection and retention arrangements and policies.

22.3 Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately with the local authority and other agencies where required or where this is necessary to safeguard a pupil or support attendance.

23 Monitoring and review

23.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually and earlier where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local arrangements or the School's circumstances.

23.2 Attendance information will be regularly reviewed as part of governance, and appropriate challenge and support will be provided to school leaders.

23.3 The School will keep attendance procedures and strategies under ongoing review as barriers and patterns change. Where appropriate, the School will seek the views of pupils and parents/carers when reviewing its approach.

24 Version control

Date of adoption of this policy	September 2025
Date of last review of this policy	September 2026
Date for next review of this policy	September 2027
Policy owner St. Francis' College	Deputy Head Pastoral