



St. Francis Xavier's RC Primary School

Love one another as I have loved you

Attendance Policy

Our Mission

Share God's love with one another

Follow your dreams

EXcel in citizenship

Our Mission is to:

- Be a witness to the values, teaching and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church
- Promote achievement and enjoyment for all
- Expect the best for individuals
- Inspire learning
- Collaborate with the community
- Promote a healthy and safe life style
- Create a sustainable school
- Continually strive to be effective

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Acts 1996 and 2002 require parents or carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once at the start of the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

Philosophy

At St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School we promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out. We are committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. The school works with parents and carers to ensure high attendance for pupils and the headteacher, Mrs Elizabeth Christopherson, oversees attendance monitoring. Good attendance is attending school for every session of every day the school is open to them. (In this policy the term 'parents' also includes 'carers'.)

For a child to reach their full educational achievement pupils should attend school every day. St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We aim to provide appropriate guidance to parents concerning pupil attendance, taking into account the updated guidance from Department for Education, 'Working together to improve school attendance,' 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the 2024 guidance produced by the DfE.

Each term the school will examine its attendance figures and use rigorous strategies to follow up absence with parents. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

At the start of each academic year during the introductory 'Meet the Teacher Afternoon' for parents, the guidance for attendance will be presented. Those parents not attending will receive a hard copy of the information provided.

Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality on arrival to school every morning
- to attend school for every session of every day the school is open
- to account for the daily whereabouts of every individual pupil if they are absent from school
- to monitor the punctuality of pupils the headteacher speaks with parents on an individual basis
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise the occurrence of poor attendance and absenteeism
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- pupil attendance is rewarded through termly gold, silver and bronze stars
- the class with the highest weekly attendance is rewarded with a weekly certificate
- a pupils' attendance is stated on the Autumn Term Target Report and Summer Annual Report
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- to discourage parents taking children out of school during term time on holiday. The headteacher personally follows up every holiday absence request and explains the impact on pupils

Principles

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. We will:

- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued
- Send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed
- Work with all members of the school community and the local authority in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy
- Encourage parents to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance (Appendix 2)

Herefordshire Local Authority introduced an attendance team September 2023. Our 'Attendance and Engagement in Education Officer' is Sam Lait. The role of the attendance team is outlined below:

- A visit to school each term to support the school in reviewing attendance data
- Support in identifying, discussing and agreeing joint targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or those at risk of becoming so; including referrals to Early Help
- Facilitating training for attendance leads and SLT on attendance guidance
- Working with schools to support with the development of new systems, policies and processes to include evaluating school attendance action plan
- Bringing schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area

Weekly information is sent to parents and pupils on the newsletter informing them of class attendance figures. Attendance is an important feature of school life. Consistent and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place. Every child absent from school is accounted for on a daily basis. Persistent absence is followed up by the headteacher, Mrs Christopherson, speaking to parents on an individual basis. If specific pastoral support is required for a family, the Student and Family Support Worker, Mrs Jan Poole, will liaise with the family and seek appropriate support for the family, if required. The governor responsible for monitoring attendance at St Francis Xavier's School is Mrs Deborah Hillyer.

The Registration System

The School uses a computerised system (Scholar Pack) for keeping the school attendance records. This attendance data is shared with the DfE. The national codes given in Appendix 1 are used to record attendance information. Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Electronic back up of registers takes place automatically with the school's MIS system.

In the event of computer failure, paper registers are kept. Entries on paper registers are completed in ink. All corrections must be visible (no correcting fluid). Paper registers are kept until they have been uploaded onto the computer system when it has been restored.

Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning session (8.55am) and the beginning of the afternoon session (1pm).

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These include:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Punctuality

The school gate opens at 8.40am giving parents a window of 15 minutes to drop off their children before 8.55am when the school gate closes and registration begins. Parents are expected to drop their children off punctually to aid the smooth start of the school day. Morning registration takes place between 8.55am and 9.00am. The register remains open until 9.15am. Pupils arriving after 9.00am and before 9.15am are marked as 'Late' on our school attendance records. Any pupil arriving after 9.15am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Parents arriving late with their children after the gate closes at 8.55am need to sign the school's 'Late Register' to enable patterns of late arrival to be monitored by the school.

Absence

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on each day of absence as early as possible. If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by the close of registration the office is informed and our office staff will contact the parent as a matter of concern. If a child has not been located, and contact has not been established with any of the named parents, the school will make all reasonable enquiries to continue to establish contact, including making enquires to known friends and wider family. If the location of a pupil continues to be a cause for concern, the headteacher will make a decision based on information received, follow the school's safeguarding policy and phone Children's Services in the first instance, followed up with a referral to Children's Services (*this is a legal requirement*) and contact the police. The school will include details of action that they have taken.

It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that reasons for absence are recorded accurately and kept up to date. In addition, they should be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the headteacher and the school will try to resolve the problem with parents. If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to WEST or the School Nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence are logged on Scholar Pack for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Planned and Unplanned Absences

There is overwhelming evidence that a high level of consistent school attendance is essential if children are to reach their full educational potential and achieve their targets. St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School aims for all children to be in attendance for 190 school days in the year. The school has rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance.

Planned Absences

In line with Government and Herefordshire Local Authority policy, planned absences for holidays during term time are not authorised by St Francis Xavier's RC School. In exceptional circumstances absences can be authorised at the discretion of the headteacher but only if there are strong and clearly explained reasons why the absence is necessary.

Leave can only be granted only if the proper procedures have been followed:

- Applications for '**Planned Absences**' should be made **at least six weeks before the date required** unless there are good reasons why a shorter period of notice could not be avoided
- An 'Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form' (available from the school office) must be fully completed, explaining clearly why any absence during term time is necessary and, if applicable, why 6 weeks notice could not be given. The school office will provide assistance with the form if necessary
- Leave will not be granted retrospectively

Authorisation of leave is a discretionary power of the headteacher and **conditions may be attached to this permission**. If such conditions are not met satisfactorily, authorisation may be withdrawn.

There is no right of appeal against the headteacher's decision. However, if parents feel strongly that the decision has been reached unfairly they may consider using the school's complaints procedure, which is explained in a separate policy document available from the school.

All requests for exceptional leave of absence will be reviewed on an individual basis. Requests will not be unreasonably refused if the headteacher is convinced that there are sufficiently strong or compelling reasons that are genuine and unavoidable. In each case the school will take into account a variety of factors such as:

- The child's previous attendance history
- The time of year (e.g. Year 6 SATs which are currently held in mid May)
- Parental circumstances
- The rate at which the child is making progress and their capacity for making up the time lost
- The nature of the trip (is it an exceptional experience?)
- Previous similar requests (including holidays taken in current and last academic year)
- There may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the headteacher might agree that an immediate holiday might enable the child to better deal with the situation

Permission is likely to be refused if:

- The child has already had some absence in the current or preceding year
- The child's attendance history has been a cause for concern
- It is near or during test times
- It coincides with the start of the school year
- The reason given is simply that the holiday is cheaper in term-time
- The school believes that it may have a harmful effect
- The reasons lack compulsion or justification, such as:
 - child or family member's birthday
 - poor weather in the school holiday period
 - availability of desired accommodation
 - holiday had been booked prior to consultation with the school

Holidays taken during term time

Every request for absence continues to be monitored by the headteacher. Parents are reminded at the start of each year at the class 'Meet the Teacher' session, that family holidays should be taken during published school holidays. The school does not grant permission for any family holiday during term time. If a holiday is taken after the school has refused authorisation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (Code G) and a referral may be made to Herefordshire Council who may issue a penalty notice or initiate legal proceedings against you under the Education Act 1996 (Section 444).

Every child's education is of paramount importance to the school and children miss sequential learning steps when they are taken out of school. Should a significant period of absence for a holiday during term time be requested, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the headteacher and a member of the governing board where the process of fixed penalty warnings from the LA will be explained. The penalties for a pupil's absence are cumulative should the parent request additional holidays at a future date.

Shorter Period of Notice

In circumstances where a shorter period of notice is required, the parents should contact the headteacher at the earliest opportunity to discuss the nature of event requiring absence. They will also need to complete the **Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form** indicating clearly reasons why the short notice for the **Planned Absence** was unavoidable. If the headteacher is convinced that the reasons are compelling and justifiable, the request will be considered, as appropriate.

Compassionate Leave

We understand that there may, on rare occasions, be unavoidable cause for absence, e.g. illness of a close relative. Although it is important that children's education suffers as little as possible, such requests will be viewed with compassion. Parents should talk directly with the headteacher.

In School Procedures

All applications for planned absences are to be forwarded to the headteacher. The decision to authorise the leave will be made by the headteacher in consultation with the class teacher and any other relevant member of staff. A decision will normally be made on requests within 10 working days. If a longer consultation period is required in a particular case the parents will be notified accordingly.

Unplanned Absences

When a child is absent from school and no request for leave has been received or if no reason has been given for the absence, the absence will be recorded by the school as 'unauthorised'.

Persistent Absence

At St Francis Xavier's School we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10%. The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year

St Francis Xavier's Primary School will use a 19-day tracking system to make you aware of the number of days your child has missed in education. This will allow us to work together to reduce the number of days and attempt to prevent your child from reaching this number. Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school, and we may have to report this to the Local Authority and follow external legal proceedings.

St Francis Xavier's Primary School will identify patterns of absence and if there is a risk of attendance becoming problematic, the school will work with parents to understand the barriers regarding attendance. Support will be offered by the school initially through the Student and Family Support Worker and if deemed necessary, the school will work with external partner agencies to support the family for example, WEST and Vennture. These actions will be discussed regularly and reviewed with parents.

Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

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

Legal Sanctions

There are several sanctions that the school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence the headteacher will talk to parents first to identify the reason for absence and limit the amount of time the child is absent from school. However, if there is lack of parental support for their child's attendance, the school will follow the National Framework for Penalty Notices. Following the headteacher's discussion with the parents when a request for exceptional leave of absence form has been received, the parents will receive a letter from the school office informing them of the headteacher's decision.

Penalty notices will be issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. Penalty notices can be used by all schools where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence.

New Government regulations for penalty notices that come into effect on 19th August 2024 are as follows:

- **Per parent, per child**
Penalty notice fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for unauthorised absences, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period**
Penalty notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
- **First offence**
The first time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be:
 - £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days
 - Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days
- **Second offence (within 3 years)**
The second time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be:
 - £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days
 - There will be no offer of a reduction in rate
- **Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)**
The third time an offence is committed for unauthorised absences a penalty notice will not be issued. The local authority will instead consider other legal options to improve attendance and this could include prosecution. If prosecution in the Magistrates Court is deemed appropriate, fines can be up to £2500.
- **New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period**
The three-year rolling period starts for parents when the first penalty notice is issued to them after the 19 August 2024.

Please refer to Government guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance and Herefordshire Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices updated 19.8.24.

Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. (Working together to improve school attendance, 2024 page 52). Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other support has failed to improve a child's attendance. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown) and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

It is the school's responsibility to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team by making referrals.

Monitoring

In instances where a child's attendance either falls below an acceptable level or shows a regular pattern of absence or poor punctuality, parents will be informed of the school's concerns. If attendance remains poor, the situation may be raised with the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO), Jo Ellis, and be referred to Herefordshire Council who may take legal action.

Unauthorised Absence

Attendance at school is checked daily through the office. Parents are contacted if no absence form has been submitted. Reasons for the absence are established and parents are contacted until the school can ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil. The headteacher is notified and appropriate action is taken until the pupil is located.

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence is marked as unauthorised. Where the parents keep a child away for longer than agreed, then the extra time is also marked as unauthorised.

Welcome Back

At St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School staff promote positive attitudes to pupils returning after absence. It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Promoting attendance and Celebrating Success

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

Weekly newsletters on the website keep parents in touch with school events and help to foster the sense of a community. It is important that pupils feel cared for at school, that they enjoy coming to school are happy and love learning.

Weekly attendance certificates are awarded to the class with the highest attendance. Gold stars are awarded at the end of each term for pupils with 100% attendance, silver stars are awarded to pupils with 99% attendance and bronze stars are awarded to pupils with 98% termly attendance.

Attendance figures are given to parents on end of term reports where no safe-guarding issues may arise providing this information.

The school works with the Herefordshire LA Attendance and Engagement Officer, Sam Lait, to monitor absences.

Monitoring termly % of attendance

Children's attendance rates are regularly examined. If there is a problem with a child's attendance or punctuality, parents will be informed of the school's concerns. The attendance of these children is monitored and if no improvement is noted, a meeting will be arranged to give a letter expressing concern and offer support. If attendance remains poor, a meeting with the governor responsible for attendance will be arranged and next steps put in place.

Attendance at St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School

St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School expects pupils to attend school for every session of every day when the school is open. The school has high expectations for school attendance and the headteacher follows up every absence request individually with families. The headteacher oversees attendance monitoring and reports to the Governors' Pastoral Support Committee and the FGB termly.

This policy was written September 2013, updated February 2024 and September 2024. The policy was ratified by the Full Governing Body of St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School on 23rd September 2024.

The policy will be monitored every two years by members of the Senior Management Team and Chair of Governors and will be reviewed September 2026 unless circumstances require an earlier review.

Signed: *Paul Williams* Date: 23.9.24 Chair of Governors

Signed: *Elizabeth Christopherson* Date: 23.9.24 Headteacher

APPENDIX 1 – CODES FOR ABSENCE

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (am)	Present
\	Present (pm)	Present
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Approved education activity
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	Authorised absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance	Authorised absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration	Approved education activity
E	Suspended or permanently excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised
I	Illness (Not medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J1	Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised absence
K	Attending education provided by the LA	Attending an approved educational activity
L	Late arrival before register is closed	Present
M	Medical / Dental Appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code / description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	Not counted in possible attendances
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence
U	Late (After register closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not counted in possible attendances

Y1	Unable to attend due to transport not being available	Not counted in possible attendances
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not counted in possible attendances
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y4	Unable to attend due to closure of school site	Not counted in possible attendances
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendances
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not counted in possible attendances
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole school closure	Not counted in possible attendances

APPENDIX 2 - THE LAW

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

APPENDIX 3 - GUIDANCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

St. Francis Xavier's RC Primary School

Headteachers may only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only. If you take your child out of school and the absence is not agreed by the headteacher, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. The school will then notify Herefordshire Council and you may face a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or other legal action.

All family holidays should be taken during published school holidays. The school will not grant permission for any family holidays during term time. An attendance of 85% each year for a primary school child, means that 1 whole year of primary education is missed.

DfE Guidance for 1st September 2024

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence, including unauthorised holiday absence, has been introduced following changes to the law. These new Government regulations are effective from 19 August 2024 and affect how penalty notices are issued across England.

Changes for penalty notices from 19.8.24

- **Per parent, per child**
Penalty notice fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for unauthorised absences, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period**
Penalty notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
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- **New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period**
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Please refer to Government guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance and Herefordshire Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices updated 19.8.24.

Please consider your child's absence extremely carefully and contact the school if you have any queries.
Thank you.

Mrs Elizabeth Christopherson
Headteacher