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Introduction

St Faith's School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils and recognises this can be achieved by supporting and promoting good attendance. Under the Education Act 1996, parents, and carers have a legal duty to ensure their child receives a meaningful and age-appropriate full-time education.

In the DfE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' it states:

'Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'

This policy has been written with reference to the following Department for Education (DfE) guidance:

- ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) (August 2024)
- ['Children missing education'](#) (August 2024)
- ['Keeping Children Safe in Education'](#) (September 2024)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting school attendance](#) (September 2023)
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#) (August 2024)

Aims

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To help promote a whole school culture of good attendance and punctuality
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the School, pupils, their families and the Local Authority
- To emphasise the importance of good attendance to all pupils and their families
- To set out the School's attendance management policies and procedures

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following related School policies, procedures, and resources (where applicable), which are accessible to parents on the school's [website](#) or can be provided upon request, at no charge:

- Missing Child Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Pastoral, Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Parent Contract with School Terms & Conditions
- Parents' Handbook

The School's Responsibilities

It states in the DFE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance':

'All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community.....attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school.'

The School will promote the benefits of good attendance and have high expectations for every pupil. Where a pupil's attendance becomes a cause for concern, the School will work with pupils, their families and where appropriate, the Local Authority.

Designated staff members within the School have day to day responsibilities for monitoring attendance and promoting punctuality, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Looking out for trends and patterns in a pupil's attendance, including incidents of lateness;
- Liaising with appropriate staff regarding any attendance and punctuality concerns;
- Contacting parents where the school has concerns over persistent lateness or attendance;
- Considering persistent poor attendance as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues and where appropriate, addressing the matter in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Where absence escalates and a pupil's attendance drops to 95% or below, the School will consider the reasons for absence and (with the support of local authorities where appropriate) will consider putting additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. The School will sensitively consider the reasons for absence.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child receives an education, suitable to their child's age and taking into consideration any special educational needs they may have. Pupils must therefore attend

School every day that it is open, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as illness or permission for absence has been granted in advance, by the School.

Under the terms of the Parent Contract, which is a legally binding contract between the parents and the School, parents are obligated to:

- Make any application for authorised absences, as soon as practically possible on [My School Portal](#);
- Provide the School with reasonable notice if a pupil will be absent from school for a period of time, and provide an accurate explanation and details for each absence;
- Co-operate with St Faith's by notifying the School of any special arrangements needed, ensuring the pupil's health/medical conditions or special educational needs are met by keeping the School up to date and informed about matters which affect or may affect the pupil. These could all be potential barriers to pupil attendance if they are not addressed efficiently and tailored to the pupil's individual needs.

Parents are bound by the terms relating to conduct and attendance in the Parent Contract and failure to ensure a child attends school, or to engage with the School about any attendance issues, could amount to a breach of the Parent Contract, or that the Parents are acting unreasonably.

Please be aware that if your child attends school 90% in one school year it is the same as having a half day off every week. Over 5 years this is roughly the equivalent to missing half a school year.

Absence Procedures

Aside from illness, no pupil should be absent from School without prior permission from the School.

Illness

If your child is ill you should inform the school in one of the following ways:

- Via MySchool Portal **on each day of absence.**
- By contacting the School Office (01223 352073) before 0830 **on each day of absence.**

Leave of Absence

Any requests for leave of absence should be made via the form on [MySchool Portal](#).

Authorised Absences

Only exceptional circumstances will warrant an authorised leave of absence from School. The School will consider each application for an authorised absence individually, taking into account the circumstances surrounding the request, and any other relevant information.

Absences will be authorised by the School for matters such as sickness, medical and dental appointments (where these are not possible outside of School learning hours) and religious observance (usually for one day). This may include a pupil visiting another educational establishment. Please note that pupils should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for an appointment or visit.

The School understands that on occasion, parents may request a leave of absence for a pupil that falls outside of the above categories. In this instance, the School will follow the same procedure and consider each application for an authorised absence on a case-by-case basis.

Unauthorised Absences

When the School has not received an acceptable explanation, in writing, provided by parents, or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the School, this will be marked as an unauthorised absence. An example of an unauthorised absence may include, but is not limited to, lateness after the end of registration, attending a sporting event such as Wimbledon, an international cricket, rugby or football match, attending a concert or going on holiday during term time.

The Deputy Head or Head of Pre Prep, in consultation with the Headmaster, and in accordance with the DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence will be authorised or unauthorised. The School cannot grant authorisation of absences retrospectively.

Pupils with mental health or medical conditions or special educational needs or disabilities

The School seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment for all pupils. The school recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities.

The attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, the School will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include the School's pastoral team working closely with the pupil and parents, making reasonable adjustments where required or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.

The school will also consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

The School encourages parents to engage with the support offered by the School and be reminded of the importance of regular attendance and the positive emotional and mental wellbeing benefits for children attending school. If parents are aware of their child experiencing social, emotional or mental health issues, they should inform the School and together, they can work on developing a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to support the pupil's attendance.

Managing Absence

It is important the School is aware of all pupils' whereabouts, when under the School's care, for reasons relating to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.

Here is an extract from 'Keeping Children Safe in Education':

'Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.'

The School will follow up any pupil absences with parents to ascertain the reason, ensure efficient safeguarding action has been taken if required and to identify whether the absence was authorised or not.

If a pupil's attendance is low, or they are frequently late to School, parents will be alerted to the concern by the School.

If there is no improvement in the pupil's attendance and this falls below 90%, the School will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the pupil's absence and attempt to find a resolution together.

If the issue persists and/or the pupil is absent from school for an extended period of time without authorisation, the School has a legal obligation to report attendance issues to the Local Authority. Parents will be informed where contact is being made with the Local Authority over attendance, unless safeguarding concerns preclude this. Further information can be found in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on the School's website.

Interrupted Attendance

A pupil's attainment at School will be hindered by an accumulation of absence or lateness over time. For this reason, persistent lateness or non-attendance by pupils, either for registration or lessons, will result in action being taken by the School.

In more serious circumstances, where lateness and non-attendance have occurred for an extended period of time, the School has an obligation to report such instances to third party agencies, including the Local Authority.

Recording Attendance

Twice daily pupil registration is a legal requirement.

All pupils are registered in the morning at 8.20am by their Tutor. Pupils who are late to school and miss registration with their Tutor should sign in electronically in School House Reception.

Afternoon registration is completed by the member of staff teaching pupils in the post-lunch session. Unexplained absences in lessons are followed up by class teachers and the School Office informed.

The register is a legal document, and the school is required, by law, to keep a record of attendance and report to the DfE. Pupil-level absence data is 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 attendance data at St Faith's is compared to the national average and shared with governors.

Missing Children

In the event of a child becoming lost whilst in the care of St Faith's, the school will put into place measures outlined in the Missing Child Policy. St Faith's compiles an 'Unaccompanied Journey Register' to ensure that the non-arrival of children who travel to school unaccompanied is swiftly identified and followed up.

Children Missing Education

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team as the child will be classed as a 'Child Missing in Education'. If there is Social Care involvement, then the Local Authority and the linked Social Worker will be informed before ten days.

Role of governors

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis and ensuring that the Attendance Policy is implemented effectively.

Monitoring Attendance

The School monitors and analyses attendance patterns and trends to identify where parents need to be alerted and additional support maybe required for pupils. Your child's attendance can be viewed on their Attendance page in MySchool Portal.

This Policy is reviewed annually and applied in practice daily to monitor pupil attendance. Records are kept appropriately.

EYFS

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the School, parents and child, beginning from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If a child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date. Our expectation at St Faith's is that all children will attend full time, following the initial transition and settling days in EYFS, unless through discussion with families it is agreed this is not in a child's best interests.