



St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School

Policy: The Francis Fund Policy

Date of publication: October 2025

Date of approval by Governing Body: TBC

Date of next review: As required

1. Purpose

The Francis Fund exists to offer compassionate, dignified, and confidential support to families in acute financial need, helping to ensure no child is deprived of the essentials required to thrive at school. Inspired by the values of Pope Francis, the Fund serves to uphold the dignity of each individual and strengthen our school community by responding swiftly and directly to urgent needs.

2. Scope

The Fund is available to all families with children currently enrolled at the school, regardless of background or circumstance, where acute financial hardship is demonstrably affecting the student's access to a full and inclusive educational experience.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Confidentiality:** All applications and grants will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- **Dignity:** The process is designed to be respectful, compassionate, and free from stigma.
- **Timeliness:** Support will be provided quickly to ensure families receive help when it is most needed.
- **Need-Driven:** Allocation of funds will be based solely on need, not on academic performance, behaviour, or any other criteria.

4. Eligible Support

Examples of eligible support through the Fund may include (but are not limited to):

- School uniform and shoes
- School meals
- Contributions to school trips, educational visits, or enrichment activities
- Learning materials, including books and stationery
- Help and assistance with housing and furniture

5. Application Process

Families may apply directly via a short, confidential application form available on the website. Staff may also nominate a student with the knowledge and consent of the family. Applicants will be asked to outline the nature of the hardship. While detailed financial documentation is not required, the school may request basic confirmation of need to ensure appropriate allocation of funds.

A designated panel consisting of the PPG lead on the Leadership Team, PPG coordinator and Finance Manager will review applications, drawing on information from other leaders as required. Decisions will typically be made within 5 working days.

6. Fund Administration

The Francis Fund will be maintained separately from the school's general budget and public funding. 100% of donations will go directly to support families in need. Disbursements will be recorded for audit purposes but anonymised in any public or financial reporting. An annual internal review will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Fund and identify any patterns or gaps in need, without compromising confidentiality.

7. Donations

Members of the school community are encouraged to donate via Scopay, either as a one-off gift or regular contribution. All contributions are voluntary and will be used exclusively for the purposes outlined above. As the Academy Trust is a registered charity with HMRC, eligible donations to the Francis Fund may be made under Gift Aid. Donors who are UK taxpayers will be invited to complete a Gift Aid declaration so that the Trust can reclaim an additional 25p for every £1 given. Please note that Gift Aid can only be claimed on voluntary donations where the donor or their family does not directly benefit from the support provided by the Fund.

8. Communication and Awareness

The Fund will be communicated to families via newsletters, the school website, and staff, with an emphasis on availability, confidentiality, and dignity. Staff will be briefed to recognise signs of financial stress and to sensitively direct families to support. ***This does not replace PPG funding or the process for applying for FSM.***

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The impact of the Fund will be assessed qualitatively through anonymised feedback and pastoral outcomes. The College will publish a brief annual statement summarising how the Fund was used, without revealing personal details.

11. Linked Policies

The Francis Fund Policy is closely linked to and informed by the following school policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Equality Policy; Pupil Premium Policy. It is also linked to other hardship funds.