

# Priory Rise School



## Attendance Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Local Governing Board	<b>Date:</b> 21/11/23
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## 1. Aims

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

- Promoting good attendance
- 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

We will also promote and support 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](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 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
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher at Priory Rise 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
- 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
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

### **3.3 Learning mentor (in conjunction with the headteacher)**

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

### **3.4 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 twice a day – at the onset of the morning and afternoon sessions every day.

Notify school office and attendance officer of any attendance concerns as they arise.

### **3.5 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the pastoral lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Notify attendance officer of any attendance concerns as they arise
- Monitor leave of absence requests from families – including reasons for absence and any trends/patterns of absence that may occur and notify attendance officer

### 3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. Parents must advise of reasons for absence
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Attendance register is taken using the Arbor electronic system.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first morning session and at the start of the afternoon session every day. 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 1 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.

For pupils in Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2, gates open at 8.30am. All pupils in these year groups must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day. Any pupils in FS, Years 1 and 2 arriving after this time, must sign in at the school office and will be issued with a late mark. For pupils in Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2, the register for the first session will be taken at 8.40am and will be kept open until 9.00am.

For pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 gates open at 8.40am. All pupils in these year groups must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day. Any pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 arriving after this time must sign in at the school office and will be issued with a late mark. For pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 the register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.10am.

The register for the second session will be taken at the start of each afternoon session for all pupils and will be kept open for 10 minutes in each session.

## **4.2 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 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7). Parents should provide a clear and detailed reason for a child's absence, i.e. more than merely stating that a child is 'poorly' or 'sick'.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than five days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 in advance.

## **4.3 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.

Leave of absence should be requested in advance via the 'Request for Leave if Absence' form that can be downloaded from the school website or collected from the school office.

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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence using the same 'Request for Leave of Absence' form, as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, with an L code
- After the register has closed will be marked with a U code, denoting that the pupil has arrived at school well after the register has closed

The school monitors any pupils who are persistently late. Letters are sent to parents of children who are persistently late, and support is offered to encourage families to ensure that children are on time for school. Should timekeeping not improve parents/carers will be invited into school to have a meeting with the learning mentor and headteacher, setting targets and developing a support plan. Should timekeeping still not improve parents/carers may receive a fine.

## 4.5 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 contact any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will send an email asking families to contact the school immediately. If families cannot be contacted, the learning mentor may make a visit to the family address, or in extreme circumstances contact the police to carry out a welfare check.
- 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 three working days after the session
- 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.

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents are regularly encouraged to access details about their child's attendance and absence levels via their child's attendance record on Arbor.

Attendance data for each child is sent out with their end of year school report.

Where attendance is a concern, families are contacted via letters and notified of attendance concerns at the end of each term.

# 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

## 5.1 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.

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

It is important that parents make any 'exceptional circumstance' requests in plenty of time to enable the school to have time to consider the request and respond appropriately. The governing board has discussed and agreed the exceptional circumstances under which absences may be authorised. Parents need to be aware that authorisation for these events is at the discretion of the headteacher; it is not guaranteed.

Holidays, birthday celebrations and special family gatherings are not considered to be exceptional.

The headteacher will consider each request individually. For exceptional circumstance events, one day's absence only will usually be authorised unless the event is some considerable distance away, in which case the headteacher will take into account travelling arrangements.

Examples of 'Exceptional Circumstances'	Notes
A visit to another school which the child will soon be joining	
Taking the entrance examination for another school	
Sitting an award bearing music or dance exam or attending a residential visit organised by the Milton Keynes Music Centre	Residential visits occurring in the period during or prior to the assessment period in May will not be authorised
Taking part in an exceptional sporting event	For example, playing in a county or regional fixture

Taking part in a theatre performance licensed by a local education authority	
Attending the marriage/civil ceremony of the child's parents or an immediate family member	Please ensure that proof of attendance at these occasions is attached when applying for authorised leave of absence
Attending the funeral of a close family member	
A religious observance	
Compassionate leave	For example, following a close family bereavement

Any request for leave of absence should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office or via the school website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental 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/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' 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.

The school will not consider or grant authorised leave of absence for any holidays or day trips.

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers 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/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- 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

The school deploys a number of strategies for rewarding and improving attendance. These include:

- celebrating good attendance in weekly Friday assemblies
- children work towards achieving the class attendance award each week – where the highest attending class from the previous week receives a negotiated 'class treat' (20 minutes)
- regularly explaining the importance of good attendance in whole school assemblies and in class
- at the end of each term 100% attendees receive a 100% attendance certificate



- › at the end of each school year 100% attendees receive a 100% attendance certificate for the whole school year

## 7. Attendance monitoring

One of the school learning mentors monitors school attendance and makes regular telephone calls to families where pupils are demonstrating attendance that may be causing a concern. The learning mentor regularly meets with the headteacher in attendance review meetings to discuss any pupils whose attendance is a concern. Where this is the case, letters are sent out to families to notify and to encourage improved attendance, following the termly attendance review meetings.

Should the school not see improved attendance following these notifications, families are invited into school for an attendance meeting with the headteacher and learning mentor, where targets for improved attendance are set and a plan is put in place. This is then reviewed at an agreed later date.

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- › Monitor attendance and absence data 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

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.

### 7.2 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

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- › Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% 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/carers of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- › Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

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

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## **10. Summary**

It is the expectation that all children attend school for every planned session in the school year. We hope the school's approach to attendance is clear and that it sets out for parents the school's position on leave of absence and the importance the school places on good attendance.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as

		agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day