

# *Priory Junior School*

---

## Attendance Policy

Policy Date: September 2023

Review Date: September 2026



# Priory Junior School

## Attendance Policy

The DfE guidelines recognise that attendance and positive behaviour should be equally valued and considered as part of the same approach. Regular attendance and good punctuality are not only fundamental to maximising achievement and obtaining the greatest benefit from education, but are also key skills for adult life.

We aim to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance with all children and parents
- Improve the achievement of pupils by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Create an ethos in which attendance and punctuality are recognised and valued by the whole school
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised"
- Take action swiftly should there be concerns about a child's attendance
- Ensure children do not fall behind in their learning because of absence
- Work closely with families and agencies to support good attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential.

**The recognised expected level of attendance at school is 100% unless pupils with chronic health issues or there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

### Parent/Carers Responsibilities

Parent/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Parent/Carers must:

- Ensure all children registered at Priory Junior School attend regularly and punctually everyday, unless prevented from doing so by illness or medical appointment.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time, parents may on occasions be asked to provide supporting evidence from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested.
- Ensure their child arrives at school in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time, that has been unauthorised, could be subject to a penalty notice/fine.
- Report any changes to the contact details to the Office to ensure the school has the most up to date contact information.

### **Recording Attendance**

The school uses the DfE agreed attendance codes for recording absences in the register. All teachers receive an updated list of the codes annually.

The playground gates are unlocked at 8.35am for Year 5/6 and locked at 8.50am. Once the gates are locked, entry to the school is via the school office.

Attendance is recorded twice a day, at registration:

- 8.40am and 1pm for Years 5 and 6
- 8.50am and 1.15pm for Years 3 and 4

Registers are closed at 8.50am (Years 5 and 6) and 9am (Years 3 and 4).

Any child arriving at school after this time will be recorded as L, late on the register.

Pupils who arrive at school after 9.20am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as U, unauthorised late, which then impacts on their overall attendance level.

This is recorded directly into our Management Information System by the class teachers. A copy can be found in the appendix.

### **Lateness**

Registration takes place 8.40am / 8.50am to 8.50am / 9am (Years 5 and 6 / Years 3 and 4) after the start of the first activity of the day. This is also when the teacher informs the class of their daily timetable of learning and prepares the pupils for the day ahead. Pupils who arrive after the registration period and up to 9.20am will be marked as late. Any pupil who arrives after 9.20am will be marked as an unauthorised late. Children who are persistently late to school will miss a significant amount of their education.

Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parent/Carers will initially receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. This will advise Parent/Carers to speak to a member of staff to help address the issue. Should the lateness continue, Parent/Carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).

### **Reporting a Pupil Absence**

Parent/Carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 8.45am.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, the School Administrator will attempt to make contact with the Parent/Carers once the registers have closed at 9am.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Failure to make contact with the Parent/Carers to establish a reason for an absence will result in an Unexplained Absence Form being sent home for the Parent/Carers to complete and return to school at the earliest opportunity. Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a Parent/Carer to an enquiry regarding their child's absence from school.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, a letter that is headed from the medical professional or an appointment card. A period of absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment could result in an am/pm session being unauthorised.

### **Illness**

Children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea can return after they have been 48 hours clear. Children who are unable to attend school due to sickness can return once they are able to keep food down.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezing and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and are well enough to return to school.

### **COVID-19**

If a pupil tests positive for COVID- 19 and this has been reported to school, the pupil should stay at home and can return to school after 3 days if they feel well enough and do not have a high temperature.

## **School Responsibilities**

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents will always be informed by letter and or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

If applicable, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil. Should a pupil's attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO). This could result in a penalty notice/fine, or prosecution being issued by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

## **Staff**

Class Teachers will take registers promptly – recording these on Pupil Asset. If for any reason, Pupil Asset is unavailable, they will complete a paper register and ensure this is sent to the office promptly.

The School Administrator will aim to contact the Parent/Carers of any pupil who is absent from school and a reason has not been provided once the registers have closed at 9am.

Staff will ring the first priority contact number to establish a reason for the absence. If unable to make contact, they will call the next contact until we have been provided with a reason for absence.

If the reason for absence is unknown at the close of registration, staff will:

- Phone the contact numbers provided by the Parent/Carers to enquire about a pupil's absence
- Complete the registers in accordance to the guidelines relating to correct usage of codes
- Leave a message on voicemail requesting parents to contact school regarding their child's absence
- Log the outcome of the phone call on Pupil Asset – pupil data system
- Inform the School Attendance Officer should there be a particular concern regarding an individual pupil's attendance or lateness

## **The School Attendance Officer**

Lateness and attendance is monitored by the school attendance officer who will:

- Scrutinise the registers weekly, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers of identified patterns of lateness with an initial 'Late Letter'.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if reason unknown.
- Raise concerns with Parent/Carers once attendance has fallen below the threshold set of 95%
- Offer support or sign post to other areas of support within the community

Priory Junior School's Early Intervention Process is as follows:

- Step One. A letter advising Parent/Carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child(ren) attendance and/or lateness
- Step Two, informal contact. This can be via telephone or a brief catch up at the start/end of the school day by any member of staff, to ascertain barriers to accessing education and offering support and signposting.
- Step Three. A formal Parent Contract Meeting to be held in school, with Parent/Carers to discuss concerns and, working together, identifying support which can be offered and signposting. Targets will be set to improve the attendance and/or lateness. These targets will be reviewed at the end of an agreed monitoring period.
- Step Four. Should the targets set at step three not be met following a review, despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for children of statutory school age.
- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance and/or lateness.
- Monitor pupils' attendance within specific and identified groups

- Monitor pupil absences for those with additional medical needs
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils 'Child Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to Home Educated their child(ren)
- Follow procedures when deleting a pupil from roll
- Meet with LAAO on the allocated visits to school, who will also monitor the registers and follow up any identified concerns.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Complete a Medical Needs Assessment on pupils with absences of 15 days during the school year
- Monitor and act upon requests for term time leave of absence and ensure Parent/Carers are informed of procedures in relation to authorised/unauthorised leave

***Only the Head teacher may authorise any absence for a legitimate reason, not all absence supported by Parent/Carers will be classified as authorised.***

### **Definitions of Leave:**

Priory Junior School expects attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

### **Authorised leave:**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness, subject to pattern of illness or a medical appointment where supporting evidence has been provided to cover the period of absence. However, there is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending where the appointment falls within the school day.
- Religious Observance - only day (s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.
- There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.
- We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.**

### **Unauthorised leave:**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family, caring for relatives, birthdays or family celebrations.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when asked for.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

### **Guidance for Parents – Term Time Leave**

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term Time Leave Request form and provide

any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their child out of school during the school day.

If the school suspect Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Leave Request Form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

**Exceptional circumstance** (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as up to two days absence from school to visit a dying relative, death of a family member, attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one off event, but the following examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised and could be subject to a Penalty Notice Fine/Prosecution for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term
- Trip of a life time
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad
- Relatives coming to visit
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance

If 3 or more term time leave Penalty Notices have been issued over a 3 year period then prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued. Where a parent takes a child out of school during term time for an extended period (20 days or more), not authorised by the school, prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may also be considered.

### **Penalty Notice**

The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child (ren) this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

Parent/Carers who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.

The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes a Step-parent and the partner of a parent who lives in the same household.

### **The Local Authority Attendance Officers**

The LAAO completes a monitoring visit annually, and provides advice regarding the school's actions to resolve attendance concerns. They also provide support through the LA Attendance Helpline and email. Working with the LAAO is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance.

In extreme cases the LAAO may initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up with school, setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

**Should a child be absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns then the school will, during this time, initiate enquiries as to the child's whereabouts.**

**If we still have concerns, and the absence continues into a third week, we will contact the LAAO and inform them of a Child Missing Education (CME). The school will follow the LA's CME Procedures.**

**Should the child be subject of a Child Protection Plan, the child's social worker will be notified immediately.**

**Absence Codes – Recorded on registers**

/\	Present at registration
B	Educated Off Site (Not dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed extended holiday
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
H	Agreed holiday
I	Illness / Positive Covid result
J	Interview
K	Exam
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not based working)
X	Covid-related absences where required to self-isolate
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to pupils
AEA	Authorised Educational Activity - counted as present.

The Absence Codes are identical for all schools nationally  
 Further explanations of the absence codes are kept in the School office.



## Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

### Marking the register

Class teachers will be responsible for following up absences and communicating reasons to the School Administrator.

### Reading the registers

The registers information is read every morning after registration (period 1). It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for **EVERY** pupil (everyone **must** fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late!). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late' (+ how many minutes late). **Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.**

We operate a policy of 1<sup>st</sup> day response regarding absence across the school. The School Administrator phones parents of any child not registered at the start of the day.

### Communication with/from parents

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Child Protection perspective.

We remind parents, in newsletters, of the importance of their contacting the school as early as possible on the **first** day of absence to notify us of their child's absence; there is a dedicated line on which parents can leave messages about absence.

We require **ALL** absences to be covered by a letter, e-mail, phone call or note in logbook from parents/guardians. Every Friday the School Administrator will follow up any absences that remain unexplained. Should the class teacher receive an explanation, it is their responsibility to report back to the School Administrator. All absence notes must be sent to the school office.

### A Few Words on Lates

- Statutory Registration 8.40am (Y5/6) / 8.50am (Y3/4) and 1pm (Y5/6) / 1.15pm (Y3/4). Registers close 10mins after opening – after this time, any pupil arriving will be recorded as late (L). This closes after 9.20am. Thereafter, students' absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment.
- A student should only be marked as **late** when the teacher has completed the whole register and a pupil arrives after the register has been "sent" (electronically).
- It is important that we are consistent in our procedures across the school: parents with siblings in the school do sometimes cross-check to see that the same standards are being applied and we are consistent in our approach to latecomers. So please record Lates and the number of minutes late then re-send registers.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.

**N.B. If for any reason you are unable to take an electronic register, a paper register must be taken and sent to the School office.**

### **Attendance Data provided to Class Teachers**

Class Teachers have access to any student's attendance data via Pupil Asset. In addition, summary data is provided on progress update reports which go home termly.

### **Housekeeping procedures:**

- Take accurate registers during am and pm registration, making use of appropriate codes (present, absent, late).
- Monitor attendance of individuals.
- Raise issues of attendance and punctuality with the Headteacher.

**Monitoring Attendance: procedure and practice****1. Data collection, input and analysis:**

The School Administrator ensures attendance collection is being kept up-to-date and accurate.  
The Headteacher carries out a weekly analysis of attendance across the school.

**2. Early Intervention:**

The Headteacher identifies students whose attendance is 95% or below. Reasons are sought for why attendance is at this level. This takes place weekly on a Friday.

Where analysis shows attendance is below 94% or we are concerned, Letter 1 will be sent at this point.

Each half-term, lateness is also analysed and letters sent where there have been at least 3 lates in a half-term.

Where there are 2 unauthorised sessions, a letter is sent to parents.

A telephone call may be made if attendance does not improve at this stage.

**3. If attendance does not improve? Letter 2**

If attendance continues to fall, and has become less than 93%, Letter 2 will be sent, along with a copy of the School Attendance leaflet.

A school meeting will also be arranged to explore reasons for absences and to determine any support that might be needed to ensure it improves. Medical evidence for future absences will also be required.

A target for future attendance would be set.

If there are 8 unauthorised sessions, a penalty notice is applied for.

**4. If attendance falls further? Letter 3**

If attendance continues to fall, and has become less than 91%, Letter 3 will be sent. The letter will inform parents/carers of continued concerns and invite them to a formal 'Parenting Contract Meeting' where a clear 90% target is given over a 6 week period.

If attendance continues to fall after letter 3 has been sent, and if mostly unauthorised at 86-89%, the school will refer to penalty notices.

Attendance at 85% and below, mostly unauthorised over previous 6 weeks will lead to consultation with the LAOO, and a referral to follow formal processes. This may include a referral for prosecution.