

Our Mission Statement

Priory School is a thriving, co-educational independent school founded upon a rich Catholic heritage which welcomes those from all faiths and none.

In partnership with parents and guardians we provide a nurturing, family-based ethos, alongside high-standards of teaching and learning, enabling all pupils to achieve their potential.

We embrace diversity and interfaith understanding alongside awareness of environmental and global issues, in response to the needs of our time.

The Governors and staff at Priory School are committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors, regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional or cultural needs.

The Governors, staff, and pupils are committed to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils and staff.

To meet the needs of our school community, all our policies, including this policy, can be made available on different formats such as different font sizes or styles, colour, or alternate languages.

The Governing Council understands it has responsibility for ensuring the effective oversight of this policy and will assess, evaluate, and review as necessary.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

1. Policy Statement

At Priory School, we understand that pupils need to attend school regularly in order to achieve academic success. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind at school and pupils with poor attendance statistically achieve lower examination results than those with excellent attendance records. Priory School is committed to achieving academic excellence through outstanding attendance and we regularly monitor the attendance of all of our pupils.

2. Statutory Framework

The legal framework governing school attendance is summarised in *Working Together to improve School Attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (2024)*, published by the Department for Education (DfE). The School also complies with guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) and advice published by the Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA), regarding school attendance, which can be found on the Birmingham.gov.uk website.

3. Responsibilities of Parents

Parents with a child of compulsory school age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and ability (and to any special education needs they may have). Compulsory school age lasts from the term after a child's fifth birthday up to the last Friday in the month of June in the academic year of their sixteenth birthday. All sixteen-year-olds have been required to continue education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn eighteen.

Parents are responsible for informing the school on any occasion when their child is unable to attend due to illness, a medical appointment, or work experience, providing the reason for non-attendance. This should be done by calling the school, emailing reception or sending a message on ParentMail.

Parents wishing to take their child out of School for exceptional reasons (such as attending a funeral or wedding, religious observance, elective surgery, or involvement in a regional or national extracurricular competition) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by writing to the Headteacher in advance of the proposed date(s) of absence. The Headteacher will confirm whether the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' for which leave of absence may be granted by the School.

Parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school or otherwise. If parents fail to send their children to school regularly and that absence from school is unauthorised, parents can be prosecuted or may be made liable to a penalty notice for failing to ensure their children attend regularly at a school where they are registered pupils.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Section 23 gives the Local Authority the power to issue Penalty Notices. These may be issued when parents fail to ensure their child attends school without good reason, as defined by the law. Fines are set at £160 per parent, per child, per offence. This will be reduced to £80 if the fine is paid within 21 days. If a parent is taken to court they could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also issue a Parenting Order.

In Birmingham, Penalty Notices are used to ensure parents fulfil their parental responsibility in making sure their children go to school. They are issued in accordance with the Birmingham Code of Conduct, which is available from Education Welfare Services.

4. Persistent Absence

The Department for Education has stated the persistent absence threshold has changed from 15% to 10% from September 2015. The DfE states;

'From September 2015 (start of the 2015/16 academic year) schools will be judged against a persistent absence rate of 10 per cent rather than 15 per cent. The 10 per cent measure will be published alongside the 15 per cent measure for the 2014/15 "Pupil absence in schools in England" releases for information purposes only.' 3.2.2, page 12, 'A Guide to Absence Statistics', DfE.

Form tutors regularly monitor each child's attendance and refer pupils with persistent absence to the relevant member of the leadership team who will write a formal letter home to parents informing them about their child's persistent absence. Interventions will be put in place to support the child and their parents in the anticipation that their attendance record will improve.

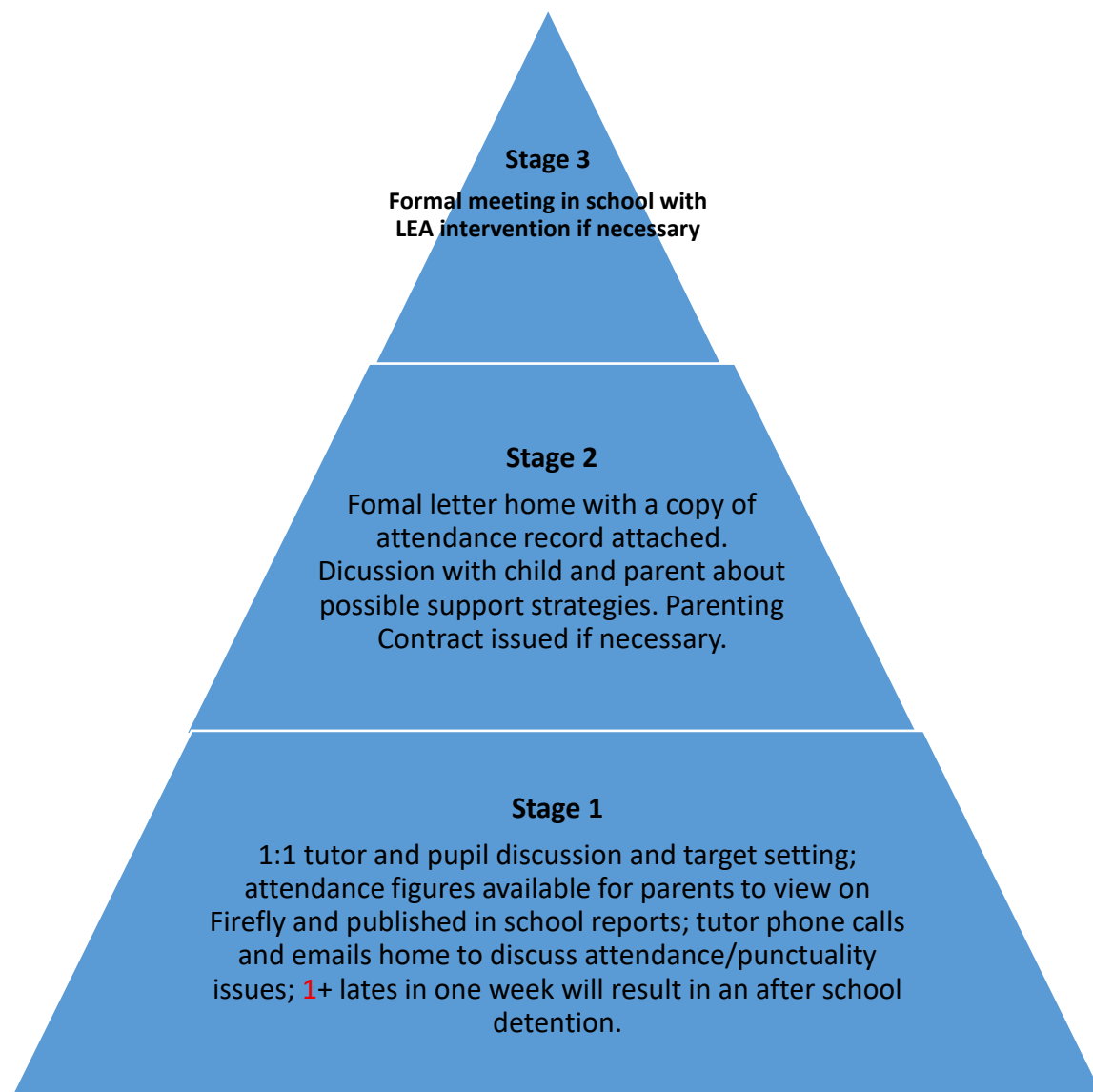
Where parents need support to prevent their child from truanting or habitually arriving late, the School may offer to enter into a Parenting Contract. This is a voluntary agreement between the parent and school under which the parent agrees to comply with certain requirements and the School aims to provide them with the support that they need. It may also be necessary to consult the LEA for assistance in this matter.

5. Arrival and Registration of Pupils:

All children should be on the top lawn ready to attend form time with their tutors at 8.45am each day, although children can attend our breakfast club from 7.30am in the Dining Hall. The register is taken electronically on ISAMS for every lesson, with registration and period 5 classed as the legal registration. A day counts as 2 attendances. Morning registration ends at 9.00am. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she will be marked as late, and the number of minutes that the child is late will be recorded on ISAMS. After 9.15am, a pupil will be recorded under code U, and this will become an Unauthorised Absence.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the main Reception. The signing-in/out register at Reception is used in the case of a fire or any other emergency as an appendix to class registers. Registers are checked regularly by the relevant member of the leadership team to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers, and to assess the reasons and incidence of any absences.

6. Intervention Strategies



7. Absence Protocols

Reason for absence	Evidence required
Sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are expected to notify the school reception by 9.15am on each day of illness. Parents are required to provide a letter to clarify reason for absence. This should be handed into reception when the pupil returns to school.
Medical appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency medical appointments can be made during the school day; however, we ask that if possible, they are arranged either first thing in the morning or at the end of the school day. This will minimise disruption to your child's learning. Non urgent appointments at to be made out of school hours or during school holidays. All medical appointments are to be authorised by the senior management team and clear documentation provided.

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Holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holidays may no longer be taken during the term time due to new regulations issued by the DfE in September 2013.
Important religious dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School will normally authorise a maximum of one day's observance of key religious festivals• A request for absence must be made to the Headteacher in advance of the festival• Families should consider carefully the balance between taking time off and schoolwork, particularly in Key Stage 4 and 5• In periods of mock or public examinations, pupils must attend school to take relevant examinations• Absence without prior consent will be recorded as unauthorised

Where absence is unavoidable, the pupil **MUST** take work in advance of the absence where practicable. In all cases, classwork and homework needs to be completed. We would encourage pupils to take responsibility for organising this work, with staff and parental assistance.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Heads should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

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A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Headteacher.
If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided
Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation
If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed
Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

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- This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:
 - The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).
- This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on Admission Register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Monitoring and Review

The curriculum is constantly being reviewed to take account of educational initiatives and respond to the future priorities of the school.

This policy will be monitored by the Assistant Head, who will report to the Headteacher on its implementation on a regular basis.