

Priestley Primary School

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Autumn 2023



Introduction

Priestley Primary School is committed to raising the educational attainment of pupils who attend the school and giving them the best possible opportunities to access education to enable them to achieve their full potential throughout their lifetime.

In order for every child who attends this school to achieve their full potential, they need to attend school regularly, on time and be ready to learn.

Irregular school attendance is a contributory factor in social exclusion and underachievement. Children who do not attend school regularly are more likely to be the victim of crime themselves or to become exposed to offending behaviours by others.

The school aims to improve school attendance and punctuality by:

- Promoting the value and importance of regular school attendance
- Giving/providing consistent information to individuals and families
- Reducing all forms of unauthorised absence

In order for this policy to be effective it is essential that 'Attendance and Punctuality' is a priority for everyone involved including parents, children, staff and governors. The importance of attendance and punctuality must start from Foundation and continue through to Year 6

The Law

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the 'parent' is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from the age of five when a child should attend school from the start of the term commencing on or after their fifth birthday. Section 444(1) If a child of compulsory age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence. You may be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale: A maximum fine of £1000.

Section 444(1A) If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to do so, they are guilty of an offence. You may be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale: A maximum fine of £2500 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or both.

Early Years Foundation Stage

As stated above a child does not reach compulsory school age until they turn five. Parents choosing to have their child attend the EYFS unit before this age are under no legal obligation to do so. However, the engagement in education at this stage in a child's development is crucial. Regular attendance is encouraged from the outset and will create good habits for the future. By the time the child is registered on roll at school (the term following their fifth birthday), they will already be used to coming to school regularly and on time.

If we have concerns with non-attendance at Foundation/Early Years, we will talk to parents/carers when they bring their child to school. All contact will be logged, and we will work with parents/carers to remove any barriers to their children attending.

Registers

Registers are a statutory legal document, which must be completed accurately by a member of the teaching staff. Attendance registers are taken twice a day - at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session.

Reporting and Recording of Absences

Where a pupil is absent from school, parents/carers have a legal responsibility to inform the school of the reason for their child's absence. At Priestley parents/carers are expected to contact the school office before 8.30 am and advise why their child will not be attending school, and how long they expect their child to be absent. If parents/carers do not inform the school of their child's absence a text will be sent out requesting that they contact the school office and advise why their child is not in school. This text will be sent by 9.30am. If the school does not receive a reply by 10.30am, it will then attempt to phone the parent. If the school cannot make contact, other contact phone numbers for the child provided will be attempted. At this point should the school still have no contact it will be recorded on the school's safeguarding concern system due to the fact that a legal requirement has not

been fulfilled and a child is potentially missing. This is also the point where the designated safeguarding team at school will consider referring the potential missing child to MASH/ Social Care/Police.

Whenever pupils are absent, and their parents have not told the school the reason for the absence, such as not contacting the school to advise it that the pupil is ill, the school must mark the pupil as unauthorised absence. It can change this mark at a later date if the parents provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence.

Once a reason for the absence has been given then the absence will be given a code. This may be either authorised or unauthorised. Any absence whether authorised or unauthorised is an absence. Only unauthorised absence would be considered in the event that the pupil would need to be referred to Education Welfare Service for a Penalty Notice. **It is important to note that an absence is authorised by the school and is not the decision of the parent/carer.**

If a member of staff is concerned that an absence/pattern of absences is not justified, then this should be reported to the Head Teacher who may request an Attendance Meeting the family. Even where a reason is offered for an absence, the school may feel that the reason is unacceptable, and the matter should be referred to the Headteacher. Similarly, where a pupil is missing school regularly through illness it may be appropriate to contact the school nurse so that a meeting can be arranged.

Children should only be away from school if they are ill or have a medical appointment. It is not acceptable for children to be away from school for day trips, shopping, haircuts or purchasing school uniform and shoes.

Each week the school will review the cases of any pupils with less than 90% attendance. The school will work pro-actively with parents to enable all children to be at school every day to ensure that they reach their full potential. Referrals to Education Welfare Service will only be considered where a parents/carer is not engaging with the school and making an effort to improve their child's attendance or where a child's attendance is consistently below 85% which is considered to be the persistent absence figure.

Medical Appointments

Parents are requested to make routine medical appointments in school holidays or after school. If this is not possible, appointments should be made at the start or near to the end of the school day. If an appointment is made for the afternoon, then the child would be expected to attend school in the morning (unless due to the nature of the appointment, this was not possible). If the appointment was made for the morning, then the child would be expected to be returned to school for the afternoon session. **It is not necessary to have a whole day off school for a routine medical appointment.** Parents/carers should provide evidence of the medical appointment either prior to the appointment or when returning the child to school.

Authorisation of Leave of Absence

Leave of absence will only be authorised for **exceptional circumstances**. All requests will be considered on an individual basis taking into account the circumstances, such as:

- the amount of time requested;
- age of the pupil;
- the pupil's general absence/attendance record;
- length of the proposed leave;
- circumstances of the request;
- purpose of the leave;
- frequency of the activity; and
- when the request was made.

If a parent/carer wishes to make a request for leave they must put this in writing by completing one of the school's 'Leave of Absence Forms, **Appendix 1** stating the reason for the request, any 'exceptional circumstances' and the dates they would like their child to be absent from school.

The headteacher will consider the request and whether it is deemed as 'exceptional circumstances'. If the leave of absence is not considered 'exceptional circumstances' but is still taken the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a referral may be made which could result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

Leave of Absence Requests for the Purpose of Taking Holidays

This school does not consider leave of absence for taking a holiday to be an exceptional circumstance and holidays requested **will not** be authorised.

Religious Observance

Priestley Primary School promotes respect for the faiths and values of all its communities. There are different religions celebrated in school and it is important that we recognise the diversity of the school population. Therefore, one day for each religious festival (no more than three days in any one academic year) should be counted as authorised absence. The Pupil Regulations 2006 state that absence for religious observance should be treated as authorised (absence) **'on a day exclusively set apart for religious**

observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs'. Additional days off for extended celebrations will be treated as unauthorised absence.

In respect of pilgrimages, schools may request to see copies of visas. Dates of return should also be agreed prior to the period of leave. Parents should be advised about this policy and procedures regarding unavoidable delays in returning or taking extended leave that has not been authorised by the school.

Missing Children

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect, and in older children may raise concerns around child sexual exploitation. After 5 days of non-school attendance and after the school has been unable to contact parents, the school should refer to the Education Welfare Service. They will work closely with the school to try to identify the child's current whereabouts/destination.

After four weeks of non-attendance and efforts to find the child prove unsuccessful (i.e. the child is no longer believed to be residing at their address), the child will be deemed as missing. The Education Welfare Officer will then refer the child as missing to the CME Officer, and the Education Welfare Officer will advise the school when or whether to remove their name from the school roll. The school should create a 'lost pupil' record on the national Lost Pupil's Database School to School (s2s) to assist Children Missing in Education Officers to identify and locate children. *(Information taken from Missing Child Protocol December 2011)*

Safeguarding

Any safeguarding issues regarding a child being taken out of school in circumstances that cause concern will be discussed with the parent/carer, if appropriate to do so, and may also be referred to Children's Social Care.

Punctuality

We expect all pupils to arrive in school on time every day that the school is open.

- Morning register opens at **8.30am** and closes at **9.00am**.
- Afternoon registration takes place on the children's return to the classroom after Lunch break.

The school day begins promptly, and we advise parent/carers to ensure their child is in school for **8.30am**.

- Any pupil arriving after this time is required to report to the reception with their parent/carer, who will be expected to share the reason for their child's late arrival. Also, by arriving via the reception ensures that the child's dinner arrangements have been noted.
- Any pupil arriving after the register has been taken will receive a late mark (L code - late before the close of register). Any pupil arriving on or after the register has closed at 9.00am will be marked as absent for the entire morning session (U code - late after the close of register). This is classed as an "unauthorised absence".
- Parent/carers will be contacted regarding patterns of late arrival. Repeated late arrival after the close of registration may result in a referral being made to Wiltshire Council for consideration of prosecution or for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Lateness will be monitored regularly along with absence. If lateness starts to occur frequently, then parents will be spoken to by class teacher and/or the Parent Support Adviser.

Late Record

Office staff will record the reasons for lateness on the individual pupil's database on SIMs. The number of minutes late should be recorded as this is a requirement should the case be passed for Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices can be issued for **unauthorised absence** or **unauthorised lateness**. Currently, a penalty notice will incur a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increased to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The fines are issued per child and per parent.

Collecting Children after School

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Regularly requesting to take children out of school early for any reason is not acceptable without the permission of the Headteacher who may grant permission in exceptional circumstances.

The school reserves the right to refer families to Wiltshire Children's Social Service for children who are repeatedly not collected by parents/carers at the end of the school day as this is considered to be willful neglect.

The school also reserves the right to take children, who are not collected, to either contact Children's Social Services or the local police when the parent/carer cannot be contacted to find out why the child(ren) have not been collected.

Leave of Absence Request Form

Taking your child out of school during term time may harm your child’s academic progress.

Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore, please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.

Please read the attached Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time.

Name of Child (One form for each child)	
Date of Birth	
Class	
Date of First Day of Absence	
Date of Return to School	
Number of Days requested	
Known siblings and school(s) attending	

Exceptional Circumstances (reason) for Leave of Absence during term time:

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Signed:
(Parent/Carer)

Date:

<p><u>For school use:</u></p> <p>Attendance %:</p> <p>Total sessions absent this academic year:</p> <p>Total unauthorised absence this year:</p> <p>Total unauthorised absence previous year:</p>	<p>Request authorised: Yes/No</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>Dated:</p>
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Initial Warning Letter

Date

«AddressBlock»

«CO»

«GreetingLine»

ATTENDANCE

This letter is intended as a friendly reminder about your child's attendance with the intention of working with you, without having to involve the Local Authority and Educational Welfare Officer. This letter is being sent to all parents whose child had less than 90% attendance between September and December 2021.

The school is required to inform parents if their child's attendance falls below an acceptable percentage. The national expectation for a pupil's attendance at school is 96%, which equates to 10 sessions (5 days) off each year.

Your child's attendance is calculated from September each year and any absence according to the Department for Education, even authorised absence such as illness, or medical appointments, unfortunately counts in the number of sessions your child has been absent.

Therefore I am writing to let you know that «Name»'s attendance was «AutoMergeField»% from the beginning of September until the end of December 2021.

I will therefore be required to monitor your child's attendance over the coming weeks and look forward to seeing them in school and therefore improving their attendance negating any need for any further correspondence in for this matter.

Yours sincerely

A MARSH-BALLARD
Headteacher

School Attendance Meeting Letter

Date

«AddressBlock»

«CO»

«GreetingLine»

ATTENDANCE

As you are aware, schools have a statutory duty to monitor pupil attendance and to work with families to improve it where this is low. The national average for a pupil's attendance at school is 97%, which equates to 12 sessions (6 days) off each year. Here at Priestley Primary School we like to work alongside our families to help children reach this target, without having to involve the Local Authority and Educational Welfare Officer.

As you will be aware from our previous correspondence this academic year, we have been carefully monitoring your child's school attendance. It is with this in mind that I am writing to let you know that «Name»'s attendance was «AutoMergeField»% at the end of Term 1. On reviewing your child's attendance at the end of Term 2 it remains below an acceptable % at «AutoMergeField»%.

As there is now an urgent need to improve your child's attendance at school, I will require you to attend an informal meeting to discuss reasons for your child's low attendance. I would therefore request that you contact the school office within five working school days to make an appointment to come and see me in order to address this issue.

Yours sincerely

A MARSH-BALLARD
Headteacher