

## Attendance Policy

Policy Code:	SW12
Policy Start Date:	September 2024
Policy Review Date:	September 2025

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HS2 Medical Treatment Policy
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR33 Records Management Policy
- SW2 Exclusion Policy
- SW4 Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SW17 Safeguarding Adults Policy
- TL6 SEND Policy

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## **1 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The mission of The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (The Trust) is to improve the life chances of our pupils so that they become true citizens of the world, and to encourage the expectations of behaviour and personal conduct that are expressed within The Trust's Contract. For The Trust to achieve this, it is vital that our pupils attend regularly and on time.
- 1.2 The Trust supports the principles enshrined in Articles 28 (right to education) and 29 (goals of education) of Unicef's Rights of the Child Charter. The Trust endorses the position that: "Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment."
- 1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire SCITT.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 This policy has been written in line with the DfE guidance *Working together to improve school attendance*.
- 1.5 For Apprentices, their attendance is monitored by their employers who will follow their own procedures for managing absence. However, if necessary, any concerns will be raised with Priory Apprenticeships when the apprentice has their progress reviews. An apprentice's attendance at workshops held by Priory Apprenticeships will be logged and monitored through Smart Assessor.

## **2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation**

- 2.1 The Education and Standards Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Director of Safeguarding.
- 2.2 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

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2.3 Parents/carers and pupils have a responsibility to ensure they are aware of this policy and the procedures to be followed in cases of absence.

### **3 Aims**

3.1 To improve pupils' achievement and life chances by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.

3.2 To promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and valued and which encourage pupils to have a sense of their own responsibility.

3.3 To support pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school, which are preventing good attendance.

### **4 Definition of a parent**

4.1 For the purpose of this policy, a parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

### **5 The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education**

5.1 The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

5.2 Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

5.3 This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

5.4 For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support

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provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms, including crime.

## **6 Working together to improve attendance**

6.1 Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires our academies and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

1. **Expect** – Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the academies.
2. **Monitor** – Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
3. **Listen and understand** – When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents and listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
4. **Facilitate support** – Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome barriers outside of school. This might include early help where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
5. **Formalise support** – Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending upon the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.
6. **Enforce** – Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **7 Expectations of schools**

7.1 In order to manage and improve attendance effectively, the DfE has identified the following key expectations of schools:

1. Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
2. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
3. Have a clear school attendance policy, which all staff, pupils and parents understand.

4. Accurately complete admissions and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
5. Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
6. Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
7. Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

## **8 Expectations of Trustees**

### 8.1 Trustees are expected to:

- recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Trust's ethos and policies;
- ensure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
- ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance, ensuring that training on attendance is included in the Trust's continued professional development offer for all staff;
- share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the Trust; and
- ensure each setting has a Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance, and a member of the Local Governing Body (LGB) is assigned to support them with this role.

## **9 Expectations of Local Authorities**

9.1 The Local Authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.

### 9.2 As a minimum, local authorities are expected to:

- **Rigorously track local attendance data** to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to

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provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.

- Have a **School Attendance Support Team** which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
  - **communication and advice:** regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area;
  - **targeting Support Meetings:** hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils;
  - **multi-disciplinary support for families:** provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance; and
  - **legal intervention:** take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the **attendance of children with a social worker** through their Virtual School.

## **10 Admission and attendance registers**

- 10.1 All settings within the Trust will have an admission register. All pupils, regardless of their age, must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.
- 10.2 The admission register must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the academy, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the academy, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.
- 10.3 A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.
- 10.4 Each setting must take the attendance register at the start of each morning sessions of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion the academy must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 10.5 Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance of admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. As the

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attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry.

10.6 On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time. The codes are summarised in the DfE guidance.

10.7 All schools are legally required to share information from their registers with the Local Authority. As a minimum, this includes:

- **new pupil and deletion returns:**
- **attendance returns** (all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of 10 x school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised – G, N, O or U); and
- **sickness returns** (all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness).

10.8 All Trust settings provide specific pupil information (daily attendance data) on request to the Secretary of State.

## **11 Granting leaves of absence**

11.1 All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad (in line with a licence issued by a Local Authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA));
- attending an interview (for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with);
- study leave;
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable; and/or
- exceptional circumstances.



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- 11.2 With regards to exceptional circumstances, all schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. It must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Settings will then consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Please be aware that exceptional circumstances are deemed to be one-off events which are unavoidable.
- 11.3 If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.
- 11.4 If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. in Sixth Form) leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with.
- 11.5 Please see Appendix A for the leave of absence request form. These can be obtained from the academy reception.

## **12 Analysis of attendance and absence data**

- 12.1 As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. Each academy will regularly analyse attendance and absence data to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and will look at historic and emerging patterns across the setting and develop strategies to address them.
- 12.2 To achieve this, each academy will:
- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This will look at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality) across the setting;
  - secondary settings may look into patterns of attendance within a session to ensure all pupils are attending all timetabled lessons;
  - provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and form tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (SEND, Safeguarding, Pupil Premium) in order to do the same;
  - identify pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases;
  - conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts and



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identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance;

- benchmark attendance data against local, regional and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement;
- devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- monitor in the data the impact of academy-wide attendance efforts;
- identify a governor who will support the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance; and
- provide data and reports to support the work of the Trustees.

### **13 Effective attendance improvement and management**

- 13.1 In line with the Trust's Maximising Values Framework, each academy will adopt a tiered approach in order to support pupils and parents with managing attendance concerns. Please see the next page for the framework that will be used by each academy for attendance improvement and management. Please be aware that depending upon availability, and the needs of the individual, the support strategies offered may differ from those outlined in the framework.

## Attendance Framework

	Intervention	Attendance trigger	Process
<b>Ther 1 – Quality First Provision (Universal)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed procedures for the completion of registers are in place.</li> <li>First day calling is used in the event that a child is registered as absent from the academy and the reason is unknown.</li> <li>Daily attendance data is monitored and attendance data reviewed weekly via the academy's S11, with additional monitoring where necessary.</li> <li>Early intervention is provided by the academy where attendance is triggering a concern.</li> <li>Academies follow Trust procedures for pupils who arrive late to the academy/lessons.</li> <li>All academies adhere to government guidance in response to requests for term time holidays/absences.</li> <li>Trust Attendance Policy in place for each academy, and shared with stakeholders.</li> <li>In the event that a child is absent from the academy, with no reason for absence, and no contact with home, a home visit will be carried out by the academy on day 3 of the absence. Settings may carry out a visit before day 3, where necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% - 100%</li> <li>Annually Up to 10 x days</li> <li>Per module* Up to 1.5 x days (3 x sessions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter 1 to be sent to all parents/carers at the start of each academic year. On a weekly basis:</li> <li>1 – 2 days absence – where appropriate, conversation with child and/or parents/carers by Form Tutor/Class Teacher.</li> <li>More than 2 days absence – conversation with child and/or parents/carers by Pastoral Lead/Phase Leader or nominated individual. If necessary, nominated individual to phone home.</li> <li>If necessary, unexplained absence(s) letter (Letter 9) to be sent – a setting has 5 x working days to allocate an absence code.</li> </ul>
<b>Ther 2 – Targeted School Support</b>	<p>Where the academy has further concerns about a child's attendance the following strategies can be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A telephone conversation with parents/carers to discuss concerns.</li> <li>A letter home informing parents/carers of the child's attendance figure and offering support.</li> <li>A letter home requesting medical evidence to be provided in order for the academy to authorise the child's absence(s).</li> <li>A meeting in the academy with the child to discuss attendance and explore available support (where appropriate).</li> <li>A meeting with parents/carers (and the child) to discuss attendance and explore available support.</li> <li>A home visit to meet with the child and parents/carers if the child is refusing to come into the academy.</li> <li>The Attendance Officer (or other nominated member of staff) will invite parents/carers (and the child) to an Academy Attendance Panel meeting to set formal improvement targets.</li> <li>Interventions are put into place where necessary, e.g. Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) for emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA).</li> <li>A mentor will be allocated for the child.</li> <li>Consideration of a part-time timetable (in accordance with EBSA PSP only).</li> <li>Attendance Officers or other staff with responsibility for managing attendance will attend LA Briefings and training events.</li> <li>Consultation with academy SENCO if necessary, to explore underlying learning needs. Completion of VSEND tool if required.</li> <li>Notify the Local Authority (LA) of 'Pupil Not Attending Regularly' (PNAR).</li> <li>Communication with the Inclusion &amp; Attendance Team (Local Authority) about any pupils of concern.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% - 94%</li> <li>Annually Up to 19 x days</li> <li>Per module* Up to 3 x days (6 x sessions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial concern letter (Letter 2) to go home. Monitor for two weeks.</li> <li>No improvement following Letter 2.</li> <li>Meeting invite letter (Letter 3) sent, inviting parents/carers into academy for meeting.</li> <li>No improvement, and moving towards 90%</li> <li>Attendance Panel meeting invite (Letter 4) to be sent.</li> <li>Attendance Panel meeting takes place. Attendance Action Plan (Template 1) put into place.</li> <li>10 x days of absence (consecutive or sporadic) – report as PNAR.</li> <li>Notify LA if a child will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness (coded as 'Y').</li> <li>Improvement letter (Letter 8) sent, if appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>If absence is due to school-based anxiety, then begin the EBSA process.</p>
<b>Ther 3 – Multi-Agency Support</b>	<p>Where concerns continue, the academy will access support from external agencies including an Education Welfare Officer. The academy, with the support of the external agency, will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referring the case to the Local Authority for consideration of legal intervention, for example, issuing a Penalty Notice.</li> <li>Continuing the PSP, with use of additional funding to access support, e.g. Art Therapy/Additional Counselling.</li> <li>Accessing support from Pupil Reintegration Team with PSP if necessary.</li> <li>Voluntary early help assessment (EHA), and a Team Around the Child (TAC) opened where required.</li> <li>Notify the Local Authority (LA) of 'Pupil Not Attending Regularly' (PNAR).</li> <li>Making a referral to the Child Missing Education Team (CME) at the Local Authority – in line with the directed timeframe.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% - 89%</li> <li>Annually Up to 83 x days</li> <li>Per module* Up to 14.5 x days (29 x sessions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Attendance Action Plan. If no improvement, send Notice To Improve letter (Letter 5).</li> <li>10 x days of absence (consecutive or sporadic) – report as PNAR.</li> <li>Notify LA if a child will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness (coded as 'Y').</li> <li>Improvement letter (Letter 8) sent, if appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Review of EBSA process. Ongoing work with professionals and family.</p>
<b>Ther 4 – Crisis Referral</b>	<p>The academy, with the support of the external agency, will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the LA's Attendance Team to explore legal interventions, for example, Attendance Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, Attendance Prosecution, Attendance Orders and Penalty Notices.</li> <li>Referring to specialist Alternative Provision, e.g. Pligrim, Medical Needs Referral (Leicesterhire).</li> <li>Statutory children's social care referrals where there are safeguarding concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% and below</li> <li>Annually Up to 35 x days</li> <li>Per module* Up to 15 x days (30 x sessions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Attendance Action Plan. If no improvement, send Notice To Improve letter (Letter 5).</li> <li>Appropriate letter sent to parents/carers outlining action to be taken (written in conjunction with Local Authority support). (if appropriate, Letter 6).</li> <li>10 x days of absence (consecutive or sporadic) – report as PNAR.</li> <li>Notify LA if a child will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness (coded as 'Y').</li> <li>Improvement letter (Letter 8) sent, if appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Medical Needs Referral to be completed, e.g. Pligrim.</p>

\*For the purpose of this document, a module has been set at 6 x weeks (30 x days).

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## **14 Children who cannot attend school because of health needs**

- 14.1 Wherever necessary, the Trust will follow the guidance set out in the DfE's *Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs* and refer to the non-statutory guidance *Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance*.
- 14.2 Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school. These pupils are still expected to attend school regularly, as in many cases attendance at school may serve to help with underlying issues as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in the future.
- 14.3 Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Therefore, additional support may be needed in order to these pupils to attend school.
- 14.4 In all cases a setting will:
- work with the pupil and family to understand the individual needs;
  - work in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with the Local Authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available); and
  - regularly review and update the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.
- 14.5 School staff are not expected to diagnose and/or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil. They should:
- facilitate any relevant pastoral support;
  - consider adjustments to practice to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability;
  - ensure joined up pastoral care where needed, and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate; and
  - make a sickness return to the Local Authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (illness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 x

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consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness will reach or exceed 15 x school days.

14.6 For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, staff will aim to:

- work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed;
- work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day;
- establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements;
- consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability; and
- ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

14.7 In order to fully support a child, staff will seek to work with the assistance of a range of other agencies. Staff should:

- make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available; and
- consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the Local Authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals as required.

14.8 If the child has an education health and care plan, staff should:

- communicate with the Local Authority where a pupil's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs;
- where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education health and care plan in collaboration with parents; and

- where needed work with the Local Authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

- 14.9 Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long-terms, a setting can request medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with DfE guidance.
- 14.10 Where parents do not engage in support, a setting will work with the Local Authority (or other local partners) to formalise that support and as a last resort, enforce attendance through legal intervention.

## **15 Part-time timetables**

- 15.1 All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.
- 15.2 A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing the timetable with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.
- 15.3 Any academy wishing to place a pupil on a part-time timetable must complete the Trust paperwork for this.
- 15.4 A part-time timetable should:
- have the agreement of both the setting and the parent the pupil normally lives with;
  - have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan;
  - have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary; and



- have a proposed end date, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision.

15.5 Where a pupil has a social worker, the setting will keep them informed and involved in the process.

15.6 If the pupil has an education health and care plan (EHCP), the setting will discuss this with the Local Authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.

## **16 Persistent and severe absence**

16.1 Pupils are deemed to be persistently absent where they miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Where this occurs, each academy will work with the Local Authority to put in place additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils.

16.2 Pupils are deemed to be severely absent where they are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). Where this occurs, a concerted effort is needed across all relevant services to prioritise them.

16.3 Where severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, despite support facilitated by the academy, Local Authority and other partners, the academy's safeguarding team may consider a statutory children's social care referral.

16.4 Safeguarding issues, such as unexplainable and/or persistent absence, can put children at risk of harm. Staff should be alert to this and report any concerns they might have to the safeguarding team, in line with their setting's safeguarding procedures.

## **17 Attendance legal intervention**

17.1 Where support offered by each academy, the Local Authority and other partners is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.

17.2 Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis. Settings will work with the Local Authority in these instances.

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17.3 The DfE expects schools, Trusts and local authorities to work together to make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution. These include:

- Attendance contracts (previously referred to as ‘Parenting contracts’)
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices

### **Penalty Notices**

17.4 In line with the DfE’s National framework for penalty notices, the threshold for considering a penalty notice is:

- **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.**

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, and these sessions can be consecutive or not.

The period of school weeks can also span different terms or school years.

17.5 If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent, or support has not worked, a ‘Notice to Improve’ should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. Before a ‘Notice to Improve’ is sent to parents, a member of the academy’s Attendance Team will work with their Local Authority Link Officer to ensure it is the most appropriate course of action.

17.6 Schools and local authorities should decide which parent(s) to involve in attendance legal intervention, but generally this should be all parents who have day to day responsibility for the child.

17.7 The academy will not refer a case to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued without first working with their Local Authority Link Officer, who will approve the referral.

17.8 Where a pupil attends school in one Local Authority and lives in another, the overarching principle is that both the Local Authority in whose area the pupil attends school (the ‘School LA’) and the Local Authority in whose area the pupil lives (the ‘Home LA’) work together to support the pupil and family. The DfE guidance sets out responsibility in specific circumstances.



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17.9 Parents/carers who wish to dispute a Penalty Notice (PN) issued by the Local Authority (LA) for school absence can make a representation to the Academy Headteacher. If the academy confirms that the absence was unauthorised, the PN from the LA will stand and the academy's involvement is at an end. Parents/carers who wish to take a challenge further can choose not to pay the PN; this will lead to the case being referred to the Magistrates' Court. In court, the parent/carer will be given an opportunity to outline the grounds for their challenge. Parents/carers should be aware that, should the court find them guilty of the offence of *Failing to Secure Regular Attendance of a Pupil*, it can impose a higher punishment upon conviction (e.g., a fine of up to £2,500; a community order; or a jail sentence of up to three months. The court could also issue a Parenting Order and/or order full payment of the legal costs of the case). Conviction will also result in a criminal record for the parent/carer.

## **18 Training**

18.1 Training on attendance will be provided to all staff, with level and content varied depending upon need/job role.

18.2 As a minimum, all staff will have training that includes:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances;
- the law and requirements of schools, including the keeping of registers;
- the strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance; and
- the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

18.3 For staff who have a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders, training will also include:

- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data; and
- any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

## **19 Policy change**

19.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

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## **The Priory Federation of Academies Attendance Policy**

This Policy has been approved by the Education and Standards Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.

**Appendix A – A copy of this form is available from the academy reception**

<b>Request for a leave of absence</b>				
In line with the Trust's SW12 Attendance Policy, only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Please complete this form and submit it to reception at your child's academy.				
<b>Academy:</b>				
<b>Name of child(ren):</b>				
<b>Class:</b>				
<b>Dates (inclusive):</b>	<b>From:</b>		<b>To:</b>	
<b>Please state the reasons for the request:</b> <i>You may submit a covering letter.</i>				
<b>Name of parent(s) submitting request:</b>				
<b>Signature:</b>				
<b>Date:</b>				

To be completed by the Academy

<b>Request for a leave of absence – Academy response</b>				
<b>Current attendance:</b>				
<b>Authorised:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>Unauthorised:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>If applicable</b>				
<b>Authorised dates (inclusive):</b>	<b>From:</b>		<b>To:</b>	
<b>Sign-off</b>				
<b>Name of member of staff (SLT):</b>				
<b>Signed:</b>				
<b>Date:</b>				
<p><u>Authorised absence request</u></p> <p>Any future absence requests are subject to the terms of the letter sent to you at the beginning of the academic year, which clearly states that any absence that is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and your child may reach the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.</p> <p><u>Unauthorised absence request</u></p> <p>The period of absence you have requested is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances and therefore, if taken, will be coded as unauthorised absence.</p> <p>As outlined in the letter sent to you at the beginning of the academic year, in line with the new DfE National Framework, penalty notices can be used by all schools where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.</p>				