

## Attendance Policy

Policy Code:	SW12
Policy Start Date:	September 2020
Policy Review Date:	September 2022

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

- SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SW4 Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HS2 Medical Treatment Policy

---

## 1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The mission of The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (The Trust) is to improve the life chances of our students 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 students attend regularly and on time. Where the reason for absence is unavoidable, this must be communicated to the relevant Academy.
- 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."
- 1.3 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 Training, Priory Apprenticeships, Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance SCITT.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.5 The Trust is committed to leading a mentally healthy organisation, which includes a commitment to and promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Therefore, all Trust policies and procedures ensure this commitment is incorporated in order to support all staff and students. Members of staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers, and students are encouraged to speak to any member of staff, if they feel any part of this policy would affect their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Any such comments should be passed to the Trust's HR department ([FederationHR@prioryacademies.co.uk](mailto:FederationHR@prioryacademies.co.uk)) for appropriate consideration at the next available point in the policy review cycle.
- 1.6 In addition to adhering to the DfE guidance *School Attendance (2020)*, each Academy will be working in accordance with the temporary DfE guidance *Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year*.

---

## **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 Student Welfare.
- 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.
- 2.3 Parents/carers and students 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 students' achievement and life chances by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- 3.2 To promote positive and welcoming atmospheres in which students feel safe and valued and which encourage students to have a sense of their own responsibility.
- 3.3 To support students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

## **4 Importance of Regular Attendance**

- 4.1 The DfE guidance *School attendance (2019)* and *The Education Act (1996)* identifies that parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- 4.2 Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less both in primary and secondary school. Any absence during term time affects the continuity of a child's schooling and more frequent absence seriously affects their learning. An attendance rate at school of 95% sounds good, but this equates to missing 10 school days during the academic year, or 50 lessons in total. If a child has 95% attendance over five years from Year 7 - Year 11, this means they will have missed 50 school days and 250 hours of teaching and learning time.
- 4.3 Following a period of unauthorised or persistent absence by a pupil of compulsory school age, any parent/carer may be considered for a penalty

---

notice. Penalty notices are issued through the courts to both parents/carers and any fine is paid to the Local Authority.

## **5 Lateness**

- 5.1 Poor punctuality is unacceptable. A student who misses the start of the day, misses vital tutorial time and preparation for the day ahead and may not get their registration mark. Arriving late to lessons is also disruptive to teaching and learning and, again, the student may miss important explanations, instructions or tasks which prevent them from understanding the lesson objectives and making good progress in the lesson. In situations where lateness is beyond the control of the parent/carer/student, e.g. due to external transport provider, the Academy will work with external organisations to minimise disruption to education.
- 5.2 The times of each Academy's school day are listed on the Academy's website and are available on request. All students are expected to be in their registration room by the time the Academy day begins.
- 5.3 The morning register is taken electronically and students will be marked as Late if they are not in registration by the time the register is taken, but have arrived shortly afterwards.
- 5.4 Once the morning register is closed, in accordance with the regulations on attendance, any student arriving after this time will receive a mark to indicate they are on the Academy site, but this mark may not count as a present mark and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- 5.5 If parents/carers are experiencing difficulty in getting their child to school, they should contact the Academy in order that a member of staff can assist and support them. The appropriate member of staff will request to meet with the parent/carer if the Academy recognises that there is a problem with persistent lateness.

## **6 Promoting Regular Attendance**

- 6.1 Encouraging and supporting good attendance is everyone's responsibility. The Trust and its academies may do this by:
- Progress Check Reports at least three times per year;
  - Display of form/class attendance and termly prizes for the form/class with the best attendance and an end of year prize;
  - Termly certificates for students with 100% attendance;

- Termly certificates for students with 96%+ attendance;
- Presentation assemblies; and
- Rewards for good attendance.

## **7 Understanding Types of Absence**

- 7.1 Each Academy is required by law to record each half-day of absence as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, the cause of absence is always required.
- 7.2 Reasons such as illness or medical/dental appointment are considered reasonable to warrant an authorised absence from the Academy, which can sometimes fall unavoidably in school time.
- 7.3 Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and no “leave” has been granted. This includes:
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
  - Truancy from school
  - Absences which are not properly explained
  - Students who arrive late at the Academy after the AM register has closed unnecessarily
  - Shopping, birthdays or looking after other children
  - Day trips and holidays in term time (which can only be agreed in exceptional circumstances).
- 7.4 The Trust actively seeks to support parents/carers where a child’s ‘illness’ is becoming a mask for reluctance to attend school. If a child is becoming reluctant to attend school, parents/carers are encouraged to contact the relevant Pastoral Team at their Academy for support. Rather than give in to pressure to excuse their child from attending school, parents/carers can discuss their concerns with the Pastoral Team to find a way forward.
- 7.5 Students with medical needs may require additional support with maintaining regular and punctual attendance. Parents/carers should contact the relevant House/Pastoral Manager at their Academy for support.

## **8 Persistent Absenteeism**

- 8.1 Students who have an absence rate of 10% or more across the academic year, or who have an absence rate of 10% or more in any six-week period, regardless of the reason, are categorised as a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA). Each Academy monitors and tracks absenteeism meticulously. However, any student identified as having been absent for 10% of the school time or is at risk of moving towards

---

that figure, will be treated as a priority and parents/carers will be notified of this and the Academy will take steps to support the child and try to improve attendance.

- 8.2 Identified PA students and parents/carers are given, where necessary, an individual action plan to support and assist in meeting their needs in improving their attendance. The action plan may include a reduced or revised timetable, a mentor, individual incentives or the involvement of outside agencies. The devising of the action plan may involve an Attendance Panel meeting.
- 8.3 If, as part of the support offered to a student, a reduced timetable is discussed which means the student will be attending the Academy for less than 25 hours this should be done by the Academy as part of a Pastoral Support Plan and will be logged on Lincolnshire County Council's 'Less than 25 hours' survey (for Belvoir Academy this will be logged through Leicestershire County Council).

## **9 Absence Procedures**

- 9.1 If a child will be absent from school, their parent/carer must:
- Contact the Academy on the first day of absence, stating a reason for the absence;
  - Contact the Academy on each subsequent day of absence; and
  - If requested, send in a written note detailing the reason for the absence on the child's first day of return to their Academy.
- 9.2 When a student is absent their Academy will:
- Telephone parents/carers if they have not been in contact with the Academy;
  - Send a letter and/or leave a message requesting the reason for the child's absence if the parent/carer has not contacted the Academy and/or the Academy has been unable to reach the child's parents/carers through first-day calling;
  - Invite the parent/carer to discuss the situation with the appropriate member of staff if the absence persists;
  - Access the service and support of the Attendance Officer/external attendance service if attendance begins to fall below 90%.

## **10 Parent/Carer Contact Details**

- 10.1 To ensure each Academy can contact students' parents/carers quickly and efficiently, a data collection sheet is sent to parents/carers at the start of each academic year for completion and prompt return.

---

10.2 If there are any changes to contact details during the year, parents/carers must notify the Academy immediately in order to ensure the Academy's records are up to date.

## **11 Attendance Officers/External Attendance Services**

11.1 The Trust values working in close partnership with parents/carers and encourages them to get in contact at an early stage to resolve any attendance problems which are becoming apparent. Working in this way is very effective and ensures a high level of success. However, if an Academy feels a situation would benefit from a more focused intervention, a student may be referred to the Academy Attendance Officer or an external attendance service.

11.2 The Attendance Officer/external service will work in partnership with the parent/carer/Academy. It should be noted that if unauthorised absence persists, and other methods of intervention have been unsuccessful, the Headteacher or authorised senior member of staff may instruct the relevant authorities to:

- Issue Penalty Notices
- Progress a case to prosecution in the Magistrates Court as it is a legal obligation of the parent/carer to ensure regular attendance of the child at school
- Apply for an Education Supervision Order

## **12 Holidays in Term Time**

12.1 There is no legal entitlement for parents/carers to take their children out of school for holidays during term time. The Trust and each Academy expect support from parents/carers by not taking their children out of school during term time.

12.2 Academies will only consider holidays in term time in exceptional circumstances. With exceptional circumstances in mind, any such holiday requests must be made no less than one month prior to the holiday. Any requests should be marked for the attention of the Academy Headteacher.

12.3 If the circumstances are not considered to be exceptional and permission to take a term-time holiday is not granted by the Headteacher, but the holiday is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

---

## **13 School Refusal**

- 13.1 In cases where a child is refusing to attend school on a regular basis, the steps taken by the Academy will depend upon the individual child. However, step one will always be to find out why the child does not want to come to school. Ideally this should be done as soon as the child refuses to come to school, before it becomes persistent behaviour.
- 13.2 There are a range of reasons why a child may become a school refuser, such as:
- A medical reason
  - A mental health issue
  - Fear of bullying
  - A grievance at school
  - Domestic abuse
  - Substance misuse issue
- 13.3 In order to support a child's return to school the Academy may employ some of the following strategies:
- Meeting with parents/carers (and the student where possible)
  - Referral to external attendance service (if applicable)
  - Requesting medical evidence to cover the absence
  - Part-time timetable (please note that this should only ever be a short-term intervention and must be logged with the Local Authority)
  - Reduced timetable
  - Counselling or mentoring
  - Issue a fixed penalty notice
  - Provide the student with a safe haven within the Academy
  - If the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) then the Academy could hold an emergency annual review of the plan to ensure the current provision is meeting the child's needs.
- 13.4 If the school refusal is due to a mental health issue then the Academy could consider a referral to specialist services, e.g. the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). If CAMHS or another medical professional say that the student's school refusal is due to a mental health issue then the Academy can:
- Refer the student for counselling
  - Set up a reduced timetable that gradually builds up attendance at school
  - Issue the student with a time-out card
  - Provide the student with a safe haven, including a quiet space at break and lunchtime
  - Temporary late starts and/or early finishes to avoid periods of high anxiety

- Commission appropriate alternative provision as a temporary measure.

## **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*.
- 14.2 Where it becomes apparent that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving suitable education due to illness, the Academy will work with the Local Authority to arrange suitable full-time education. Depending upon the child's needs, this may be Alternative Provision or a Hospital School.
- 14.3 In line with the DfE guidance, the Academy will look to make a referral to the Local Authority if it is clear that the child will be away from school, due to illness, for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. Any referral would need to be supported by medical evidence provided by medical professionals.
- 14.4 The Academy will work collaboratively with the Local Authority, the child, parents/carers and other professionals, e.g. NHS, GPs, CAMHS) to ensure that effective education is in place for children with additional health needs. The Academy will also liaise closely with the organisation providing education to the child to ensure that there is continuity of provision and consistency of curriculum.
- 14.5 When reintegration is anticipated, the Academy will work with the Local Authority and the education provider to plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside school. Each reintegration plan is likely to be individualised to meet the needs of the child in question to ensure that the reintegration is successful.
- 14.6 In the event that a child is being educated outside school when approaching public examinations, the academy will work with the education provider and the Local Authority to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for that child.

## **15 Policy change**

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

---

## **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.