



The Priory School, Hitchin

Educating Students for Success in Life

Name of policy	Attendance
Statutory	No
Date policy was updated	Autumn 2025
Date of next review	Autumn 2026
Governors committee	Wellbeing and Inclusion
Member of staff responsible for the policy	Lawrence Foster

Responsibility

Respect

Resilience

1 RATIONALE

The Priory School, Hitchin recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

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.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

Statutory Information:

- 1.1 The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 require that schools maintain an attendance register for each form with the names of all students attending in each form. This register must be marked accurately and promptly using the time designated for morning registration and Period 4 in the afternoon.
- 1.2 Schools must clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences of students of compulsory school age.
- 1.3 Amendments (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013) to 'The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006' state that the Head teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 1.4 Subsection (1) of Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduce penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. The offence of irregular attendance has not changed. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 set out the framework for the operation of the penalty notice scheme.
- 1.5 1.4 Amendments (Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013) to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

2 AIMS

- 2.1 To ensure all students attend school/lessons regularly to enable them to progress personally, socially and cognitively.
- 2.2 To undertake the school's legal responsibility to ensure all students attend lessons/school regularly.
- 2.3 To ensure that parents/carers and students are aware and understand the expectations of the school.

- 2.4 To operate clear and effective procedures for monitoring and recording student attendance.
- 2.5 To operate a system of rewards for good attendance and punctuality.
- 2.6 To maintain a high level of punctuality to school and lessons.
- 2.7 To operate clear, efficient procedures for maintaining school and lesson registers and acting promptly when poor punctuality and absences occur.
- 2.8 To provide accurate and prompt information on attendance to Local Education Authority, DfE, Governors, Parents/Carers, Employers, UCAS, OFSTED and ourselves.
- 2.9 To instigate supportive interventions in order to return a student to school/lessons, offering clarity in the understanding of procedures should a child's attendance below 96%
- 2.10 To regularly liaise with and work in partnership with our Attendance Improvement Officer.
- 2.11 There is a correlation between attendance and achievement. A well-informed policy should support good attendance and therefore good attainment.

2.12 **Why Attendance Matters**

- Poor attendance will affect the personal wellbeing and social development of a student. If they are not attending, they are not enjoying school or achieving. They are neither learning nor actively contributing to school life. If they are absent, they may not be in a safe environment; or they may be practising unhealthy lifestyles
- Poor attendance also affects the workload of teaching staff and the learning of others. Staff have to re-plan for missed work and spend extra time with students who have been absent.
- Students who miss lessons and learning develop a cognitive gap meaning they are less adept at accessing many areas of the curriculum as they progress through school.
- A child who is absent a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life
- Research from the Department for Education (DfE) indicates that 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all. Pupils who did not achieve a grade 9 to 4 in English and Maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall attendance rate of 91.2%. This compares with 94.8% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 96.3% among pupils who achieved a grade 5 in both subjects (these are national statistics)
- Poor examination results limit young people's options and poor attendance suggests to colleges and employers that these students are unreliable.
- Poor school attendance is also closely associated with crime. A quarter of school age offenders have truanted repeatedly.
- Pupils who are persistently absent in both years received worse GCSE grades than their peers who were rarely absent in both years. 36% passed at least 5 GCSEs, including English and maths, compared to 78% who were rarely absent in both years.

3 PROCEDURES

Punctuality

- 3.1 The Head of Year is ultimately accountable for a year group's attendance and punctuality. The Head of Year, Senior Pastoral Manager and Attendance Officer will regularly liaise to ensure the highest levels of attendance and punctuality. The Heads of Year meeting will provide the forum for Heads of Year to assess the attendance procedures and to receive the latest attendance data for their year groups. Year team meetings will provide for discussions about poor attendees and persistently late students.
- 3.2 The tutor and students must arrive at their registration room at 8.50 a.m. (9am on Wednesday and Friday). Afternoon Registration will take place at the start of Period 4 at 1.30 p.m. On Wednesdays and Fridays, although registration does not start until 9am, school still begins at 8.50am and should be on site by this time.
- 3.3 The register must be completed electronically unless there is a problem with SIMS in which case a manual register must be completed. The correct code must be entered and there should not be any dashes or blanks. If a student is absent, an 'N' must be entered. The Attendance Officer will then substitute the correct code when the reason for absence has been ascertained. Students arriving after their names are called will be deemed to be late and an 'L' entered on SIMS.
- 3.4 Any student who is late must explain their absence. If the reason is not adequate then a warning and then a C1 consequence will be added. Persistent lateness to school will be monitored by the HoY and the pastoral team who may use a 'punctuality report card' or other sanctions within the behaviour policy to address this. (See Behaviour for Learning Policy). If the tutor is in doubt about the reason s(he) should check the reason with the Head of Year. The Attendance Officer will send a daily report of late students to Heads of Year
- 3.5 If a student is late after 8.50am their name will be taken by the member of staff on duty. The pastoral team monitor ongoing late patterns and address these with consequences as laid out above in 3.4. Students arriving after 8.50am and before 9.10am should report to the late door beside the hall where their mobile phone can be handed in and names marked on the late register.
- 3.6 The parents of all students who come into school after 8.50am will receive a message via the InTouch system to alert them to the lateness of their child. This message will be sent automatically even if there is an appropriate reason for the lateness (traffic, medical appointment etc). Letters (see appendix 7) will be sent out every half term to the relevant parents for the students with whom we have the greatest concern to inform them of the number of late marks their child has accrued to that point.
- 3.7 Students arriving between 8.50am and 9.10am will be marked late but not absent. Students who arrive after 9.10am are marked absent for their morning registration. This impacts their attendance figure.
- 3.8 Post 16 students will be treated in the same way as Yrs 7 to 11 with regard to punctuality.

3.9 **Medical Evidence**

When a child is absent from school due to illness, there is sometimes a need for medical evidence to support the claim being made for that absence. The school's Attendance officer will prompt families where needed, in consultation with the AIO. Parents should understand that a request for medical evidence is only made where the school in turn may need to provide evidence of our own procedures to the County AIO. We understand that obtaining medical evidence can be difficult and sometimes incur a cost. Families and the school may use the letter in Appendix 5 to support this process. Medical evidence may be a prescription or medication box – in these cases we need to see a photograph of the relevant packaging with the child's name on it.

Where there is a long-term pattern of absence (the threshold for this is 15 days of illness, either in a block or presenting as erratic attendance) for medical reasons and for which no or limited ongoing evidence is provided, the school may resort to a recommendation to the AIO that FPNs and fines are issued. In these circumstances, the letter in appendix 2 would be issued, but only once the school was satisfied that they have done what is in their power to improve the absence situation. Schools are bound by DfE statutory guidance to submit a sickness return to the local authority in the cases of 15 days of medical absence described above.

Attendance routines

- 3.10 During morning registration, if the form tutor does not know the reason for a student's absence, they should enter an 'N' on SIMS. The attendance officer will then follow up each 'N' mark to establish the reason for it and enter the relevant code. These may reflect authorised or unauthorised absences. If the reason provided by parents is inadequate the school will not authorise the absence.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Shopping
- Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents
- Birthdays
- Pet going to the vet
- Illness without supporting medical confirmation
- Holiday during term time
- Religious observance that falls in term time that is not part of set dates of celebration

Authorised absence examples include:

- Music or Dance exams
- Representing sporting teams or uniformed organisations
- Raising aspirations opportunities / etc
- Orthodontist
- Pre-arranged medical appointments
- Illness that has supporting medical confirmation
- Funeral of a close family relative
- Religious observance that has set dates of celebration
- Marriage of a close family relative

If used, paper registers should be kept free from loose documentation and returned promptly to the office at 9.15a.m.

It is good practice for parents to provide a note via email to explain a child's absence. This should arrive as soon as is possible. If the Attendance Officer has spoken to the parent or the parent has emailed the school then it is not necessary for a note to be sent in by the parent. Again, if the Attendance Officer or Form Tutor is in doubt about the reason then the Head of Year/Key Stage or Senior Pastoral Manager will be consulted and they will decide whether the absence will be authorised. Authorised absence from school will usually affect a student's attendance figure. A child's attendance figure represents the time they are physically in the school or on a school approved event.

- 3.11 A register will be taken for each of the 5 lessons on Lesson Monitor.
- 3.12 The Attendance Officer will check Lesson Monitor and the Late Book before phoning parents on the first day of absence. The Attendance Officer has jurisdiction to accept a reason for absence given by the parent over the phone. The correct code will then be entered on SIMS. There should not be any 'N' codes at the end of the week. Daily and weekly summaries of attendance will be sent internally to monitor any ongoing patterns of concern.
- 3.13 The Head of Year will present assemblies to students to explain the importance of attendance. Communications are sent home at the start of the year and as part of the Head Teacher letters throughout the year to highlight the importance of good attendance.

3.14 Term time holiday requests by parents will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances in line with the amendments to the 2006 attendance regulations. The Headteacher will respond to all requests via his PA. When students miss learning for any reason, including holidays, this directly impacts their academic progress. If a student is on holiday during term time, teaching staff will not provide work for the student. Parents will receive a formal letter from the Head Teacher to explain this. This is also explained in communications from the Head Teacher to all parents in annual communications.

3.15 Should a student be asked to represent a sporting club at elite level or asked to work as an actor or model under an entertainment license, requests for absence to attend these sessions should be put in writing to the Head Teacher. Absences will be authorised at the Head's discretion.

Should a student be granted permission to attend the above sessions, it is assumed an ongoing pattern of good behaviour and attendance to school at all other times is achieved. The school reserves the right to remove this permission should the wider pattern of attendance and/or behaviour decline.

3.15 Emphasis at post 16 is placed on students being part of effective communication with the school about their absences. The following routines and expectations are in place:

- Students should contact their home school (and where relevant a consortium school where they have lessons that are affected) if they have a planned absence. Planned absences may include driving lessons, medical appointments, university visits and job interviews. There is a Google form on the school website for students to complete for a planned absence. Students may need to provide evidence of their planned absence. Communication via email is acceptable and parents should be copied in.
- For unplanned absences due to, for example, illness, the same policies apply as in the main school. This includes the school reserving the right to ask for medical evidence when needed.
- Should there be no reason for absence, a detention may be applied.
- When a student is late twice in one week, a detention is applied. Allowances are made for transport issues across the consortium.
- Attendance is expected to all parts of 6th form life, including form time and RSHE lessons.
- Attendance is continually monitored by the Head of 6th form and tutors and a warning letter may be sent home (see appendix 2) at key reporting points in the year if attendance falls below 90%, warning parents and students that attendance needs to improve. If there is no improvement after a second letter, sent at the next reporting point, parents will be invited in for a meeting in school to discuss the matter. Key reporting points are in January, April and July for Year 12 and October and February for Year 13.
- Where a student is absent from school for a period of 4 weeks or more with no good reason, in line with DfE guidance, 6th form students risk their place in the 6th form being removed. As per the whole school policies, 6th form students should communicate with school if there are mitigating circumstances for absence, for example, illness, mental health concerns.
- No fines are issued at 6th form for poor attendance in line with government guidelines.
- Attendance data is shared across consortium schools.

Attendance and Rewards

Attendance incentives and rewards form part of the school's developing reward programme (see Behaviour for Learning policy). Each Head of Year, Key Stage and the Senior pastoral manager has responsibility for development of attendance incentives and monitoring for the cohort of students for which they are responsible.

The school recognises good attendance with attendance letters, school prizes, reward points, praise and recognition in assemblies, access to reward trips and other incentives and with Head Teacher Commendations.

3.16 For post 16 students, our expectations are the same as those for Yr 7 to Yr 11. So, the rewards and sanctions remain the same. The codes are different and have been agreed by the Consortium of Hitchin schools.

3.17 Attendance achievements will be highlighted in the student bulletin. Students achieving 100% attendance for a half term will receive an R10 and for a full term, a Head Teacher's Commendation.

3.18 **Persistent Absence**

Poor attendance and persistent absence data is shared with our Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO). The AIO is a representative from the Local authority and has jurisdiction over which of the cases that the school submit for fines are taken forward. The school meet with the AIO regularly to discuss ongoing concerns.

Students with attendance below 93% will be identified and discussed within the attendance team. The Attendance Officer will print the names of these students for the AIO together with their Certificate of Attendance

Attendance is regularly monitored and then following procedures are put in place:

- Once a student's attendance becomes a concern (they may be when their attendance is approximately 93%) the first of 3 letters will be sent to parents/carers (Appendix 2) which highlights their child's attendance to the parent along with a registration certificate. The school will offer support and interventions for each case in an attempt to improve attendance.
- When attendance continues to be a concern, a second letter (Appendix 3) which states that we still have concerns and informs parents that their child's attendance will no longer be authorised unless a doctor's note is provided. This also gives details of a possible fine that may follow should attendance continue to be a concern.
- When the student has 10 unauthorised sessions in a 10-week period, parents may receive* a final Notice to Improve (see appendix 4) - an official fixed penalty warning letter sent to the parent/carer informing them that unless there is an improvement over the following 6 weeks, they will receive a Fixed Penalty notice and that their child's attendance will be closely monitored. These 10 sessions may comprise: unauthorised holiday, unauthorised absence and/or arriving late after registers have closed (9.10am).

*At this stage, a parent may not receive a Notice to Improve but may instead receive a fine notification. This would normally be, but are not limited to, cases of repeat offenses where evidence suggests intervention by school will be ineffective.

- Where no or limited improvement is made within the 6 week Notice to Improve period, a fixed penalty notification of £80 will be issued. Both parents (where both have Parental Responsibility) will receive a fine notification from the Local Authority, whether they live at the same address or not. Each parent will therefore receive an £80 fine.
 - During each stage of the fine process, the Senior Pastoral Manager will communicate with parents to support them in ensuring that their child's attendance improves. Strategies are discussed with the aim of improving attendance.
 - A Fixed Penalty will be issued where a parent/carer deliberately takes a holiday during term time (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission would not be given) and where this has resulted in a period of unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more in a 10-week period. In such cases a separate notice will
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be issued for each child. See section 3.14

- Where a parent has already been fined once, a subsequent second fine for ongoing poor attendance to school of their child will result in a £160 fine per parent. A third offense in a 3-year period would result in a prosecution and possible £2500 fine per parent and/or 3-month jail term. If a parent is found guilty in court, they face a criminal conviction.
- Where appropriate we will recommend that a student becomes an Open Case to our AIO, where legal action is considered. This may be because of ongoing poor attendance, a lack of parental engagement or intervention to improve the situation or complete and unexplained absence from school. In an Open Case, the AIO will meet with the school and parent to try and improve the situation. If attendance does not improve, a court assessment meeting (CAM) is called with the County attendance manager (Chris Thomas) and a decision as to whether a prosecution will follow, is made.
- The school monitor medium term absence and when a child is absent from school for 10 days without us having had eyes on contact with them, we are compelled to act for safeguarding reasons. This absence includes students absent from school for short term health reasons (e.g. broken leg) or longer-term reasons such as school refusal or mental health concerns. In both situations, the school must have contact with the student within each 10-day school period. A live log of these cases is kept in school. Contact may be made by online video calls, home visits or confirmation from fellow professionals (such as CAMHS, GRIT worker, social worker) that they have had eyes on contact with the child. These professionals may confirm this to us in writing or by phone. Home visits may be made without prior notification to parents.

Support Strategies in School

Where attendance becomes a concern, the school will seek to support families in improving the situation. This relies on parental engagement and lack of this may lead to referrals to the AIO or recommendations of FPNs.

Strategies the school may use include, but are not limited to:

- Phone calls
- In school meetings
- Home visits
- Meetings with the AIO
- Support with referrals to external agencies
- Referrals to internal wellbeing team
- Use of staff mentors
- Reduced timetables (time-limited)

4 MONITORING

- 4.1 Attendance and punctuality are an agenda item for Year Team and Heads of Year meetings. The minutes of these meetings are written and distributed by the Senior Pastoral Manager.
- 4.2 School attendance data is included in the Headteacher's report to the Governors. This forms part of the Wellbeing and Inclusion committee meeting agendas (4x a year) and also feeds into the full governing body meetings. Attendance data is part of the Head Teacher reporting cycle that feeds in governors meetings each term.
- 4.3 The member of SLT with responsibility for Attendance reports once a term to the SLT and the relevant governing committee. This outlines headline attendance data and strategies used to improve cases of concern. They also meet bi-weekly with the Head Teacher and Attendance is a standing agenda item.
- 4.4 The school sends automated attendance data to the LEA/DfE attendance teams on a daily

basis. Attendance data is captured by the LEA during the census data collection each Spring. An HFL autumn visit has allowed a critique of the attendance systems and policy we have in place.

- 4.5 The attendance team will monitor students who have been off school for several consecutive days and once a child is off school for 10 days, will carry out a welfare check. This may involve a visit by school staff or social workers to make eye contact and assess the wellbeing of the student.

5 COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 The school will communicate its expectations regarding attendance at the beginning of each school year. A flow chart is available to help parents understand the basics (see appendix 8) with a more detail available in this policy. Attendance data is available to parents through the SIMS parent app, is communicated as part of the progress checks and reminders are sent via the year group newsletters and head teacher's end of term letters.

Further Attendance Strategies

In exceptional circumstances, the school may look to a variety of attendance strategies in order to further facilitate families who are struggling with regular attendance for their child. These aim to support the reintegration of the child back in to school and are laid out below.

5.2 Flexible Schooling

In a very small number of cases, the school might agree with parents that a flexible model of attendance is appropriate. Hertfordshire County Council provide guidance on this and The Priory School will only consider Flexible Schooling in a small number of cases for children who might fall under the following categories:

- Severe or long-term illness.
- A staged return to school after an absence for some reason.
- Other reasons agreed in discussion with the Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher.

Hertfordshire County Council's guidance on Flexible Schooling can be found here: [hcc-flexi-schooling-advice-for-schools-parents-carers-and-professionals](#)

Part-Time Timetables

A part-time timetable means that your child will not be in school for the full 25 hours of learning across the week. It may involve a late start or early finish to the school day or possibly a full day out of school. This may be for the reasons laid out above or as part of work experience provision that we have put in place, to support a child's anxieties about attending school or as part of a study-leave provision leading to exams. Part-time timetables may be accompanied by a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) in which a set of targets, one of which will usually relate to attendance, will be laid out.

The Senior Pastoral manager will liaise with the parents of a student considered for a part time timetable to establish the reasons, timeline and transport arrangements. Approved timetables will be logged on the Herts 4 Learning portal and are time limited.

Some students on part time timetables access their learning using a 'robot'. Should a child attend school in this way, their absence will be C coded (authorised but will impact their attendance)

Part time timetables should always be time limited with a clear review process and timeline. The school will inform the LEA for all students on part time timetables through the Herts Grid portal.

Reduced Timetables

A reduced timetable means your child attends school as normal, for the full 25-hour week, but there will be one or more learning hours that will take place outside of their normal classroom. This may be put in place for reasons such as to allow your child to access 1:1 or small group provision or because they have had their subject suite reduced in the run-up to exams.

This support measure will be overseen by the appropriate Head of Key Stage who will outline timings of the intervention.

The school may seek support from ESMA as part of our reintegration strategy. This is an education support service that is time limited, with the aim of bringing students back into mainstream regular schooling. This can only be accessed with the appropriate medical evidence

5.3 Elective Home Education (EHE)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families use the term Elective Home Education (EHE) to describe when parents decide to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school.

The variety of reasons a parent may choose to home educate could be:

- Alleged bullying
- Dissatisfaction of the education system
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Distance or access to school
- Special Educational Needs

Should a parent decide to home educate, the responsibility of the children's education rest solely with their parents. The school would not be under any obligation to provide work if a child is EHE. Attending a school is not compulsory, however education is, as outlined in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Parents do not need to seek approval from the local authority to home educate their children, they will however need to bear the cost of any examinations taken. Parents would need to write to the child's school to inform them they are taking them off roll and have decided to home educate them.

The school would then fill out a EWN1 form for Counties Attendance Information Officer, to inform them of the parent's decision and accompany it with their letter.

Hertfordshire Local Authority have Elective Home Education Advisors who will make enquiries of all parents wishing to home educate their children to ensure that appropriate and suitable education is being given.

When parents contact the school regarding EHE, a meeting is held to discuss the process. The school will always look to keep a child within our education setting but if the parents choose to proceed with EHE, the school will provide guidance on next steps. See appendix 6 for an example of our protocols.

Links to other school policies:

Child Protection Policy	Special Education Needs Policy	Home School Agreement
Medical Policy	Behaviour for Learning	Flexi Schooling Policy

Appendix Table

Appendix number	Letter or document
1	An Introductory Letter re Attendance sent by Mr Foster
2	Letter 1 – First attendance concern letter (with parental help sheet)
3	Letter 2 – Formal warning letter
4	Persistent absence concern letter
5	Notice To Improve
5	Medical Evidence Request sent by Mr Brazier
6	EHE template and letter
7	Late to school letter template
8	Attendance at a Glance

Appendix 1 – An Introductory Letter re Attendance

Attendance To School

Dear Parent,

Welcome to a new year at The Priory School. We hope you have had a good summer and that your child/children are ready to tackle a new and exciting academic year ahead. This letter informs and reminds you of some of our guidance and protocols regarding attendance to school.

The school sets itself a target of achieving 96% attendance across the student body throughout the whole academic year. There is a clear and obvious link between attendance to school and academic success. This letter attempts to lay out some of our procedures and the laws we are obliged to adhere to, in order that you as a parent have a clear picture from the outset.

96% seems very high!?

An attendance record of 96% is roughly equivalent to your child missing 7 days of school across an academic year. Whilst we appreciate that there are often good reasons for absence, taking an extra day off here or there quickly sees your child's attendance figure reduce. If your child's attendance is 90% across their time with us, that equates to missing half of a whole school **year** of the five in which they spend here.

What if my child's attendance is below 96%

As a school, we have a legal duty to monitor the attendance of every child in our care. Our attendance officer, Mrs Higgs, works hard each day to identify absences and support students and families to improve attendance where needed.

Should your child's attendance drop below certain levels, we are legally obliged to act. Once below 90%, your child is legally classified as 'persistently absent'. We are compelled to raise all such cases with our Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who works for the County and holds us to account for school attendance. Warning letters are sent and these are followed by Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) if attendance does not improve. The AIO, as you would expect, can make exceptions for genuine medical issues that cause absence.

What if I get a letter from school?

If you receive a warning letter from us, it means your child's absence is of sufficient concern that we, as a school, have to address your case with the AIO. If your child has genuine medical reasons for their absence, often no further action is taken but you must produce medical evidence to support this. The AIO will not accept a defence which does not include medical evidence so you should anticipate that your case might proceed further if this applies to you.

When we send out attendance warning letters, we often receive challenging phone-calls from parents regarding their child's reasons for absence. Please understand we are only acting within the bounds of the law that we have to and always with an intention to support you and your child.

What are the academic impacts?

Have a look at some of these statistics that the government produces....

- 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all
- Pupils with no absence are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs 4-9 or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs 4-9 or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20 per cent of KS4 lessons.

As you can see, there is a clear link between attendance to school and success here. We need your children in class. On those days when they are feeling a little under the weather or there is a sprinkling of snow, try to get them out of bed and into class.

What other impacts are there?

GCSEs may seem a long way off for you and your child but all absence at any stage leads to cognitive and knowledge gaps in your child's learning. This in turn can:

- mean that they fall behind in work
- affect their motivation / mental health
- affect their enjoyment of learning
- lead to poor behaviour
- affect their desire to attend school regularly
- affect their confidence in school
- mean they miss out on the social life of school and extracurricular opportunities and experiences
- affect their ability to have or keep friendships
- impact staff workload and their ability to support yours and other children

What help can I get?

The school are always ready to support where we can. If you are concerned about your child's attendance, your first action should be to contact the school. Start with your child's form tutor and for ongoing issues, their Head of Year. Our Senior Pastoral manager, Sam Brazier, is another good contact if you would like advice or have any questions. We also include a parental help sheet with this letter to support you in helping your child attend school regularly.

And if my child is at school every day...?

Then you are giving them the best chance that you can of succeeding here. We will celebrate this within our rewards system, which includes attendance trophies, reward points, form competitions and even trips out.

Remember – grades go down when you're not around!

Yours sincerely,




Lawrence Foster



Supporting your child to attend school regularly



At The Priory School, Hitchin, we believe that for your child to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend school, on time, every day! As a parent, you are best placed to support your child to enjoy their education as well as provide them with the tools to overcome any barriers to attending school that they may face. Please take a moment to look at the information provided within this document; we hope you will find it helpful.

Non-school days:	Approx. 175 non-school days per year 175 days to rest, spend on visits, holidays, and appointments.					
Number of days absent:	0 days absence	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence (half a term missed)	38 days absence	47 days absence
Number of days in school:	190 days of school	180 days of school	171 days of school	161 days of school	152 days of school	143 days of school
Learning hours lost	0 hours lost	37.5 hours lost	95 hours lost	142.5 hours lost	190 hours lost	290 hours lost
Attendance (%):	100%	96%	90%	85%	80%	70%
Summary:	GOOD: Best chance of success! Well done!  		WORRYING: Impact upon educational progress. Missing key content and developmental opportunities. 		SERIOUS CONCERN: Significant impact upon educational progress and development. Legal action, including Fixed-Penalty Notices (FPN), may be issued by Hertfordshire County Council.	

We recognise that some children (primarily those suffering from serious medical conditions/ injuries/ or bereavement) cannot always attend school as regularly as they would wish to. However, for some children, the following advice may help you encourage regular and sustained school attendance.

How you can support your child to attend school regularly (in line with advice from the Hertfordshire County Council Attendance team):

- Work together with school staff on a joint plan, agreed by all parties.
- Maintain good communication with key adults in school (and other agencies).
- Present a united and consistent approach. If school and home are perceived as a 'united front' the positive impact upon attendance/behaviour is significant.
- Be prepared to place reasonable pressure on your child when urging them to go to school (try to ignore threats/crying/screaming/extreme reactions etc.)
- Try to acknowledge that an element of worry/anxiety around going to school can be perfectly natural. Consider ways in which you can build a sense of resilience within your child which will serve them well for the demands of adulthood.
- Make morning routines as smooth and calm as possible.
- If your child does not make it into school on time, they should be made to go to school as soon as possible.
- Manage the home environment to avoid rewarding school absence (e.g., removing access to mobile phone, gaming consoles, or TV if your child is not ill).
- Consult the NHS guidance 'Is my child too ill for school?' available online. Link here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

APPENDIX 2 – Letter 1 – Attendance concern

Dear Parent / Carer

Re:

I am writing to you as our records show that since the start of this new school academic year ()'s attendance has been ()%. Our school target for all students is a minimum of 96% so your child's attendance causes us some concern. 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of secondary education.

All parents have a legal obligation to ensure their child attends school every day on time. All absences can affect a child's learning and achieving to their full potential.

As a school we have to adhere to the DfE Statutory Guidance Working together to improve School Attendance. When your child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, schools must consider whether a Notice to Improve should be issued to parents. This can lead to a fine.

We have a legal and moral obligation to chase up low attendance and want to work with you to improve your child's record. Whilst we understand that there are sometimes valid reasons for non-attendance to school, we must encourage you and your child to ensure they are in school at every possible opportunity, including through minor childhood illnesses.

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and could also affect future applications for jobs or college places.

We wish to help you to improve your child's attendance and I enclose ()'s attendance data sheet. I would ask that you discuss this with him/her. If he/she is experiencing any difficulties in school or in particular lessons which are resulting in school absence, please get in touch so we can discuss this further. We also include a parental help sheet that may provide you with helpful hints and tips in supporting your child to attend school.

The school will continue to monitor the situation and please do reach out to us if you need further support. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

S Brazier

Mrs S. Brazier
Senior Pastoral Manager

APPENDIX 3 – formal warning letter regarding attendance

Mr and Mrs M Bloggs
1 Blogg Road
Hitchin
Herts
SG5 2UU

*****FORMAL WARNING LETTER*****

Dear

Re:

I am writing to you as our records show that since the start of this new school academic year ()'s attendance has been ()%. Our school target for all students is a minimum of 96% so your child's attendance causes us some concern. 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of secondary education.

We have a legal and moral obligation to chase up low attendance and want to work with you to support your child to attend regularly. Whilst we understand that there are sometimes valid reasons for non-attendance to school, we must encourage you and your child to ensure they are in school at every possible opportunity, including through minor childhood illnesses.

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and could also affect future applications for jobs or college places.

We wish to help you to improve your child's attendance and I enclose ()'s attendance data sheet. I would ask that you discuss this with him/her. If he/she is experiencing any difficulties in school or in particular lessons which are resulting in school absence, please get in touch so we can discuss this further.

The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Brazier
Senior Pastoral Manager

Appendix 4 – Letter 4 – Sent in cases of persistent absence/poor attendance

Persistent Absence Form School

Dear Ms

Re:

Further to my letter of () 2014) I am once again writing to you with regard to concerns over ()'s absence in school. Since the start of the school year () has been absent for a total of () sessions some of which could be due to illness. This is concerning as it means that ()'s attendance overall is ()% which is significantly below the School's minimum target of 96%. We understand that some absence due to illness may be unavoidable. However, it is important the school are aware of any on-going health problems so we can put the correct support in place.

To put your child's absence into perspective, 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of compulsory secondary school education. We are sure that you are aware that every school day counts and missing any time from school results in lost learning. We want to support () and make certain that (he/she) does not get behind with work or miss out on any opportunities school offers.

Due to the amount of absence () has already had, I have met with the Attendance Improvement Officer to discuss this matter. I must inform you that we will now require a doctor's note stating that () is not fit to be in school to be able to authorise any future periods of absence.

If you need support or help in getting your child into school, please do get in touch. We also include a parental help sheet attached to this letter that may provide some useful tips and ideas.

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child is in school. Ongoing unauthorised absence may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is a fine of £80 if paid within the first 28 days and £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine is not paid within 28 days parents could be prosecuted for their child's poor attendance. If this is your second fine, it will be charged at £160 per parent.

We will continue to monitor ()'s attendance. If you wish to discuss (his/her) attendance with us please contact me on 01462 622300 and I will be happy to offer you support, advice, and guidance.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Brazier
Senior Pastoral Manager

Appendix 5 – Notice to Improve

Dear Title, Full Forename and Surname,

RE: Pupil Name (Date of birth) – School Absence Notice to Improve

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing, and wider development, they need to attend on time, every day if possible.

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the child's parent may be guilty of an offence under s.444 Education Act 1996. If your child is a registered pupil at an alternative provision in the circumstances set out in section 444ZA of the Education Act 1996, the child's parent may be guilty of an offence.

You, «FORENAME» «SURNAME» are a parent/carer of «Students_Name», (called in this notice "the pupil") who is a registered pupil at «School_Name».

The school have offered support to you and your family to try and help improve «Students_Name»'s attendance, including: xxx

Please find below some examples of interventions schools may have implemented. It is expected that schools will amend and/or add to include only those interventions relevant to this specific pupil, ensuring that the wording in this section is bespoke and demonstrates the support first approach expected by the DfE Working Together to Improve Attendance. Please use PN Checklist to support you in considering actions.

- Telephone calls. The school contacted you every day your child was absent to understand why your child was absent and to offer their support with any issues your child may be having. Please provide some specific dates and evidence if not contacted every day child was absent.
- Letters and/or emails dated XXXXX. The school wrote to you, letting you know about «Students_Name»'s attendance, the impact of their continued absence, and inviting you to contact the school to discuss the situation further.
- Inviting you to (an) Attendance Support Meeting(s). The school invited you to (a) meeting(s) to discuss your child's unauthorised absences and to offer support to ensure that their attendance improved. Our school attendance policy makes clear the consequences, should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and/or you did not effectively engage with the support offered.
- Offered a Families First assessment. please explain if engaged or not engaged and the outcome of any support.
- Devising an Attendance Contract designed to support you to ensure that «Students_Name»'s attendance improved and to prevent further unauthorised absences from being recorded.
- Offered Reasonable Adjustments. Please provide evidence of what this was offered and engagement.
- Referrals to the following support services:

INSERT NAMES OF SUPPORT SERVICES TO WHICH REFERRALS HAVE BEEN MADE

Unfortunately, despite the support that was offered to your family, attendance remains a cause for concern. Between «WARNING_START_DATE» and «WARNING_END_DATE» (NB. Start date and end date period should not exceed ten school weeks) the pupil failed to attend regularly at «School/Alternative Provision_Name», which resulted in 10 sessions

(half days) or more of unauthorised absence being recorded. Please see the attached registration certificate for details.

You now have 6 school weeks in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time your child must show significant improvements in attendance and avoid having any further unauthorised absences recorded. Should we not see sufficient improvement and further unauthorised absences take place during this period, a Penalty Notice may be issued. A penalty notice is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days.

Please note that, if you receive further penalty notices in relation to the unauthorised absence patterns of a child for whom you hold parental responsibility/day-to-day care and responsibility or you are prosecuted under section 444 1/1A Education Act 1996, you may not be eligible for further penalty notices and your case may automatically proceed to prosecution.

Please visit the Hertfordshire County Council website and search for "penalty notices" for more information about the penalty notice fine levels and maximum penalty notice limits which are detailed within the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

N.B. Your case may be put forward for a penalty notice/prosecution as soon as a further unauthorised absence is recorded for «STUDENT_NAME».

More information regarding this notice can be found in the attached information leaflet for parents.

If you wish to discuss this notice, or discuss what further support is available, please do not hesitate to contact our team as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 6 – Medical Evidence Request

Attendance To School – Medical Evidence

Dear.....

We are writing to request your support in addressing the attendance of xxx to The Priory School. xx's attendance to school currently stands at _____% for this academic year. It is our understanding that there may be some medical reasons that have contributed to this child's absence.

As a school, we are bound by the law in terms of monitoring attendance and then warning and prosecuting families if there is persistent low attendance. When a child's attendance drops below certain thresholds and there are mitigating medical circumstances, we require some medical evidence to prove the absence is for genuine reasons. This is sometimes difficult for the parent's to provide and we are writing to you to ask for support with this.

We would be grateful if you would fill out and sign the bottom of this letter and return it to Polly Higgs, our Attendance Officer, at The Priory School, so that we can remain fully aware of the picture regarding this child.

We appreciate there are issues of patient confidentiality for you to uphold but hopefully you feel able to give us an indication below that there are indeed ongoing medical issues that you deem relevant to low school attendance.

If you would like to speak to one of our staff, please contact myself or Polly Higgs on 01462 622300. Also, if an email confirmation is more convenient for you, please email me at sam.brazier@priory.herts.sch.uk
Many thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Brazier

I give permission for The Priory School to contact _____ regarding my child's absences from school and for them to provide the relevant information regarding this absence.

Signed _____ Date _____

To: The Priory School

(please tick)

I can confirm that the child named above is receiving treatment for an ongoing medical issue that I feel is a valid reason for ongoing low attendance to school. I envisage this will be the case until approximately _____(enter date)

I can confirm that the child named above is receiving ongoing medical treatment but there is no valid reason why this should seriously impact their attendance to school.

Name _____ Job Title _____
Date _____

Appendix 7 – EHE



The Priory School – For Students deciding to Home Education

Date –

Student Initials + Year Group
BACKGROUND – INITIAL CONCERNS
Include age, gender, ethnicity, vulnerable groups, school background, home environment (where appropriate)
BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS
Include nature of learning/social/emotional/behavioural difficulties: Circle/highlight relevant categories – SEND BME DA CLA Adopted
SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS
RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND CAREER ADVICE
OUTCOMES
Include outcomes following the support and interventions listed above. (Improvement in learning, attendance, well-being, behaviour, social and emotional development & health)

Attach: attendance printout, behaviour record, progress check

PARENTS'/CARERS' VIEWS

Thinking about your child's education in the last 12 months:

Is there anything that your child has achieved this year at school or out of school that you would like to tell us about?

What are the challenges your child has faced at school this year?

L

What is the reason for your decision to home educate?

How do you intend to put home education in place?

What qualifications will you pursue?

Where will the student be entered for exams?

Any other information you feel relevant?

Dear

Thank you for informing the school that you will be home schooling xxxxxxxxxx

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to;

- 1. Age, ability and aptitude, and***
 - 2. To any special educational needs they may have,***
- Either by attendance at school or otherwise.'***

The decision to home educate your child needs to be carefully thought through. For a young person to succeed in life they need a broad range of academic, interpersonal and practical skills. Home educating a child may offer different opportunities to develop some of these skills but not to the extent that a formal education can. Although you have made the decision to home educate independent of any discussion with the school the points below should have been considered.

1. Why are you thinking of educating your child at home and have you discussed this with the school?
2. What does your child think about the idea?

3. Do you have the time, resources and ability to teach your child properly?
4. Have you considered the cost of providing the resources to educate your child and the potential impact on the family income if a parent is unable to work?
5. Is your home suitable for undertaking teaching & learning, in terms of noise, space and general environment?
6. What support do you as parents have from others? What would happen if you were unable, perhaps through illness, to provide teaching for your child for a period of time?
7. Can you provide social experiences, access to cultural and aesthetic experiences and physical exercise, to help your child develop?
8. Can you access specialist support for your child; examination, careers advice, mental health and wellbeing?
9. Do you envisage educating your child at home for the whole of their time of compulsory education, or only temporarily?
10. If you are only considering home education as a temporary arrangement then do you understand the challenges of getting back into main stream education?
11. Are you, by home educating your child limiting their life chances for when they enter employment market?

We have at your request removed xxxxxxx from our school roll and will notify the Local Authority as part of our safeguarding policy. We will ensure that all xxxxxxx previous work is returned so that you have a clear understanding of where they are at academically.

It will then become the responsibility of the Local Authority to enquire about what provision you provide your child.

If you as parents fail to satisfy the local authority that your child is receiving a suitable education, then the local authority has a legal obligation to serve on you as parents a school attendance order (SAO). This will name a specific school and require you to register your child at that school. Failure to comply with an SAO is a criminal offence.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 7 - Late To School Letter – sent half termly to key students

Date

To the parent/carer of «Name»,

I am writing to let you know that «Forename» was late to school «No» times last term.

As a school, we take punctuality very seriously as we are acutely aware of the strong link between this area and the outcomes a child has in terms of attainment. Late marks can affect your child's attendance and lead to fines if the pattern persists.

Part of good attendance is good punctuality. When your child arrives late to school, they interrupt form time or lessons that have already started. Teachers have to stop learning that is already underway, sometimes having to start pieces of work again. This does not provide the best start to the day for anybody involved. It also creates work for the wider school community who must register your child as late and maintain records to reflect their poor punctuality.

We fully understand that there are sometimes valid reasons for lateness, including medical appointments, localised traffic issues, late buses etc, but we also see students arriving late without any good reason. If you're confident the reasons for your child's punctuality issues are genuine, please ignore this letter.

We must strive to prepare our young people for the world of work, college, apprenticeships or whatever else may be their next step in life and their punctuality is an important part of this. Please support us in ensuring your child is on time to school as often as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence Foster

Late Letter from the Attendance Office

Dear Mr and Mrs

Re:

I am writing to you as our records show that since the start of this new school academic year () attendance has been only 85.76%. This level of attendance is below the school's minimum target attendance of 96% and to put this into perspective, 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of compulsory secondary education.

We wish to help () to improve her attendance, and we are particularly concerned with regard to the number of times she arrives late for registration and I enclose her attendance data sheet and would ask if you could please discuss this with her. I am writing to inform you that () has been late to registration on 20 occasions and it is a school requirement that () is on time for morning registration which begins at 8.50am.

Should () arrive after 9.10am when the registers close, this is classed as an unauthorised absence and therefore in-line with Counties Attendance Policy, should () have 10 or more unauthorised absences, you are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If there are any particular difficulties regarding this matter, please contact ('s) form teacher in the first instance or myself as Head of KS3 in order that, if possible, we can offer you appropriate support.

I would very much appreciate your support in ensuring your child is regularly on time for school, and if there is anything I can do to assist with this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Brazier
Senior Pastoral Manager



APPENDIX 8 – Attendance at a glance

The school attendance target is 96%.
There are 185 days in a school year. Attendance to 178 of these days would exceed our target. That is no more than 7 days off school.
Parents have a duty to ensure their child attends school.

My child's attendance is high

Excellent! This supports their learning and gives them a greater chance of attaining a good set of GCSEs

My child's attendance is lower than 96%

We will monitor the attendance of every child. When it falls below 96%, we keep an eye on the reasons why. These may be valid reasons and in these cases no further action is taken.

How does the school recognise high attendance?

Through our Rewards system. This includes attendance prizes, epraise points and trips out. Please see the Behaviour For Learning policy for details.

What if it remains low or falls even lower?

If absence is persistent or falls below certain thresholds (approximately 93%) without a valid reason, we are legally bound to begin a process of warnings and fines. You may receive a letter informing you of this. Absence due to holidays is authorised at the discretion of the Head who you should write to if you are considering it. These are generally declined as per government guidance. Persistent absence may result in a second warning letter from school, a Notice to Improve or a fixed penalty of £80 per parent.

How can I find my child's attendance figure?

You can contact the pastoral team or get a snapshot view on your child's last Progress Check. This is sent home termly.

What qualifies as a 'valid' reason for absence?

Often, these reasons are medical. If medical issues persist, the school may need medical evidence (e.g. doctor's note) to support a claim for valid absence. Please see the attendance policy for

Please keep communication open with school if your child is absent. Our attendance officer, Polly Higgs, can be contacted on 01462 622300, option 1

