Attendance Policy

Priestley Smith Specialist VI School

January 2024

Policy review date: January 2025

Policy status: Statutory

Responsible member of SLT: Liz Clabon DHT

Priestley Smith School is committed to the rights of the child as outlined in the UN Convention and is working towards Rights Respecting Schools silver award. This belief influences everything the school does and impacts upon all our policies.

Article 3 The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 4 Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.

Article 28 Every child has the right to an education.

Rationale

All students have the right to a high quality education. Priestley Smith School seeks to ensure the most effective education for all its pupils. In order to achieve this it is vital that pupils attend school consistently and on time. Good attendance and punctuality are important characteristics to develop for the future world of work.

The school works in close partnership with students and families to ensure the best possible attendance for each child. We monitor attendance closely. We keep students and families regularly informed on individual attendance rate, and on school and national requirements.

Good attendance can be summarised as 95-100%.
This will always be our target for all students.
Attendance below this is a cause for concern and
will prevent the student from achieving to their full potential.
The government views attendance below 90% as persistent absenteeism.

Pupils failing to attend school regularly can be a sign of deterioration in their emotional well-being or a sign of abuse and neglect. It can also be a sign that they are unhappy at school for whatever reason and we will explore and try to resolve any issues. The safeguarding of our pupils and our professional curiosity underpin our attendance monitoring systems.

Aims

1. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
2. To ensure that all students and parents/carers understand the strong correlation between good attendance and high achievement.
3. To improve the overall attendance of pupils at the school and to celebrate good attendance by all.
4. As part of the school's work on developing independence, to encourage all students to take responsibility for their own attendance.
5. To provide support (including medical advice and guidance) to parents and pupils on how to maintain the best possible attendance.
6. To ensure consistent and prompt communication between home and school.
7. To implement an effective monitoring and intervention strategy, with a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
8. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence through illness.
9. To implement, when necessary, the City's Fast Track system of addressing poor attendance.

Register Codes

The following are used when categorising student attendance each day:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
****	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I01	Illness not related to Covid	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Recording non attendance relating to Covid 19

X01	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school	Not counted in possible attendances
X02	Pupil self-isolating with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms but they have not yet had a positive test.	Not counted in possible attendances
X05	Pupil required to self-isolate as part of quarantine requirement (after arriving in the UK from a non-exempt country or territory	Not counted in possible attendances
X06	Pupil who is clinically extremely vulnerable if shielding is advised nationally or in a local area by DHSC, PHE or UKHSA.	Not counted in possible attendances
X07	Pupil advised specifically not to attend school as part of restrictions to education set out in Government advice as part of local or national restrictions	Not counted in possible attendances
X08	Pupil not attending school in line with advice from Directors of Public Health as part of outbreak management	Not counted in possible attendances
X09	Pupil or student required to self-isolate as a close contact of a confirmed case for pupils or students advised to self-isolate because they are not fully vaccinated and are over the age of 18 years and 6 months.	Not counted in possible attendances
I02	Illness Confirmed case of coronavirus	Authorised absence

KEY

Present
Authorised absence
Unauthorised absence
Approved Education Activity (Present)
Not counted in possible attendances

Categorising Absence

A mark is made for each pupil during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless the reason is already known and accepted by the school in advance or the reason is accepted as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended.

Parental Responsibility

Adults have a very significant role to play in the attendance of pupils. Good examples of attendance and timekeeping by staff and parents provide role models for pupils. Parents are informed through the initial induction process, letters and through the school website of regulations and procedures regarding timekeeping. We emphasise it is their responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance and the importance of notifying absences to school. Regular reminders are issued through school newsletters.

Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school every day, unless ill or they have a medical appointment. If their child has to attend a medical appointment in the morning or afternoon, parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school before or after such an appointment and are not absent for the whole day. Almost all students at Priestley Smith have to attend medical appointments at times. These are included in government attendance statistics, but are not included in the school's own analysis of attendance data, as attendance at medical appointments is considered essential and unavoidable. Consequently a pupil who attends medical appointments may still attain a 100% attendance reward.

Parents are expected to inform school of any reason for their child's absence by
9.15 a.m. on the first day of absence. If the school has not been notified by 9.30, the school will telephone the parent to ascertain reason for absence and if contact cannot be made will contact the emergency contact number for that child. If contact can still not be made, the school will carry out a home visit that day to check that child and family are safe and well. If no response can be gained at the home address, the school will contact the police.

Contact between parents and school **must** take place in order to account for absences.
This will usually take the form of telephone calls in the event of an unplanned absence. We also use home-school diary or letters if the parent is notifying the school of a future absence. Copies of pupil medical appointment letters and cards should be supplied to class or form staff when notifying the school of medical or dental appointments.

Student Registration

Primary children should be in school ready to register at 8.50 a.m. each day and Secondary students at 8.40 a.m. The register is taken twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Morning registration closes at 9.15 am in both departments. Children arriving after 9.15 will be considered late, unless this is due to a difficulty with a taxi journey which is beyond their control. Pupils who arrive late at school because of difficulties with organised transport will be marked as present. Where patterns of consistent late running by contractors occur, this is followed up by the school with transport providers.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Staff follow Birmingham Authority's coding system to mark the registers. The decision as to whether to authorise an absence or not lies with the school. The school will **not** authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Where no message has been received
- For visits or holidays
- For shopping trips
- For leisure days out
- Where pupils and families have overslept and missed transport and the family do not bring the pupil in to school later.
- Where it is believed a parent is condoning an unnecessary absence, e.g. the child is kept away from school because the parent is ill
- For extended absence for religious observance beyond the days recognised by Birmingham Local Authority

- In other cases where it is deemed there is no reasonable explanation e.g. Emotionally-based school avoidance (updated Nov 22)

Leave of Absence

Leave of absence can only be granted by the Head Teacher in exceptional circumstances e.g. to attend a family wedding or funeral.

Family holidays will not be approved, in line with Government Policy

School Procedures

Morning registers close at 9.15a.m., except on days of particularly inclement weather, when the head teacher will decide on the time of closure. Afternoon registration closes at 1.10 p.m. in Primary and 3.10 p.m. in Secondary. The office will phone the family on the first day of a student's absence by 9.30 a.m. if no reason has been received.

Any messages received from the guides or via the telephone should be passed onto the class teacher before the end of form time so that the register can be completed accurately.

Class and form teachers carry out ongoing monitoring of both attendance and punctuality and will contact the family if there are any concerns. Staff record concerns about pupil attendance on the student's Ongoing Story and will keep senior staff informed of these concerns, any interventions to be carried out and the impact of such interventions. Identified members of the Senior Leadership Team analyse school attendance data regularly and pupil attendance is an agenda item on the Senior Leadership Team meeting every fortnight.

The school monitors attendance rigorously and the attendance flowchart below identifies the actions taken to safeguard our students. School Staff and Designated Safeguarding Leads follow these procedures carefully.

ATTENDANCE SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE AND RECORDING

Staff must take pupil register by 9.15 each day, record N code on SIMS for all absence

Pupil absent, parent not phoned	N on register Reception make repeated calls, leave answer phone message and use emergency numbers	If no answer let DSL know by 10.30 who will decide action needed.
Is absent pupil CP/CIN/CiC or otherwise a cause of concern	Reception inform DSL immediately N on register Reception follow guidance from DSL and continue to make repeated calls	DSL will contact named Social Worker or police for advice
Continued absence	Reception make well-being phone calls **each** day even if cause known	Admin to inform parents that they must make daily calls to check welfare even when absence is understood

- DSL: actions may involve use of emergency numbers, text message, email, contacting Social Services, home visit
- Admin : Record all outcomes on Attendance Safeguarding Spreadsheet

Complex Health Issues

As a special school having students with visual, physical, social/emotional and highly complex medical disabilities, we recognise that some pupils have specific difficulties over attendance and timekeeping due to health issues. If there is a problem that would involve a student in attendance for less than the statutory time, discussions with health professionals will confirm this e.g. information through school or hospital clinics

Persistent Absence

Any pupil whose attendance is below 90% is categorized as being persistently absent.
We analyse attendance data regularly and identify those who fall in this group. We discuss issues that may explain deteriorations in attendance and then we agree on suitable interventions and a time frame. The impact of these interventions is tracked to ensure improvements over time.
In some cases where school based interventions have not led to sustained improvements we may consider the Local Authority legal processes – Spotlight/Fast Track. Senior staff have been trained on the Spotlight process.

Rewards

Pupils achieving 100% attendance (excluding medical appointments) each term receive certificates in assembly, are celebrated in the school newsletter for parents and are recognised in school displays in both Primary and Secondary Departments.

Primary class teachers also reward good attendance by putting stamps in the homework diary for attendance each day. If a child achieves five stamps in a week they get a treat from the Head of Primary in the Friday assembly.

In the Secondary Department a pupil who achieves 100% attendance each week gains a merit, credit or endeavour according to their age.

Children achieving 100% attendance, excluding medical appointments, for the whole year gain both a certificate and a reward.

Letters will also be sent out to parents informing them if their child has achieved 95-100% attendance, thanking them for supporting their child's good attendance

School Procedures to support improving Pupil Attendance (UPDATED Nov 2022)

Apart from the daily safeguarding phone calls when a pupil is absent, where we spot patterns or have concerns there will be a conversation between families and the Learning Mentor to identify any Early Help support needed.

Pupil attendance is monitored weekly by SLT and guidance given to staff to support improvments. A spreadsheet is prepared for form teachers to use to motivate pupils to improve their attendance from week to week. We recognise our pupils have significant health issues and have a high number of unavoidable and essential medical appointments. The figure they are given does not include authorised absences or medical appointments.
We are attempting to tackle casual school avoidance where pupils may not feel like coming in and may exaggerate not feeling well.
If their attendance figure stays at 95% or above OR if it improves on the last figure they receive a reward
Below is an example of the weekly information and the colour key code

🟨	95% or above REWARD
🟩	Improving REWARD
⬜	Discuss how they can improve

Pupil Name	KS5B	83.34	88.46	91.68	93.48	94.43	95.32

We also recognise that in more complex cases, emotionally-based school avoidance, needs a very robust and supportive approach. We use the following resource to support our pupils attending in these circumstances https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/addressing-emotionally-based-school-avoidance/