



Priory Junior School

Attendance Policy

Academic year 2026-2027

Policy reviewed	September 2026
Next scheduled review	September 2027
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Approval	Headteacher / Governing Body

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1. Statement of intent and aims

School attendance is everyone's responsibility. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to pupils' learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and wider development. Priory Junior School is committed to being a calm, orderly, safe and supportive place where pupils want to attend and are ready to learn.

We recognise that barriers to attendance can be complex and can sit within school, home or the wider community. Our approach is therefore relationships-first: we set high expectations, identify concerns early, listen to pupils and families, remove barriers wherever possible, provide or facilitate support, and use formal or legal intervention only when appropriate.

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote and model high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- make expectations, procedures and responsibilities clear to pupils, parents/carers, staff and governors;
- ensure accurate, timely registration and first-day follow-up of unexplained absence;
- use attendance data to identify emerging patterns early and target support to pupils and cohorts who need it most;
- work in partnership with families, the local authority and other agencies to overcome barriers to attendance;
- give particular attention to pupils with SEND, long-term physical or mental health needs, pupils with a social worker, looked-after children, young carers and other vulnerable pupils;
- reduce persistent and severe absence through a graduated, support-first approach; and
- apply attendance law, the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the Equality Act 2010 fairly and consistently.

2. Legal framework and key definitions

This policy has regard to current legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996;
- Education Act 2002;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- DfE, Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026);
- DfE statutory guidance on children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions, and education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs; and
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version).

Key definitions

Term	Meaning
Regular attendance	Attending all school sessions for their full duration unless there is a lawful reason for absence.
Persistent absence (PA)	Missing 10% or more of possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.
Severe absence (SA)	Missing 50% or more of possible school sessions, regardless of reason.
Parent	For attendance purposes, this includes natural parents, anyone with parental responsibility, and anyone who has day-to-day care of the child.
Unauthorised absence	Absence for which no reason has been provided, or where the school does not accept the reason as one that can lawfully be authorised.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

- recognises the importance of attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies;
- ensures school leaders fulfil statutory attendance duties and that appropriate staff training and resources are in place;
- reviews attendance data regularly, including historic trends, benchmarking and the attendance of key cohorts;
- provides support and challenge to school leaders on attendance improvement; and
- holds the Headteacher to account for implementation of this policy.

Senior Attendance Champion / Headteacher - Jack Cross

- sets the strategic vision for attendance and ensures effective systems are established and followed;

- oversees analysis of attendance data and the evaluation of school-wide and targeted strategies;
- authorises leave of absence where permitted by law and considers each request on its individual merits;
- leads or oversees formal conversations where voluntary support is not effective or not engaged with;
- works with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and other partners; and
- ensures legal intervention is considered only in line with the statutory guidance and Nottinghamshire's local code of conduct.

Attendance Team

The school's Attendance Team is:

- Jack Cross - Headteacher / Senior Attendance Lead / Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Holly Edwards - Deputy Headteacher / DSL
- Samantha Ford - School Business Manager
- Rachel Sinclair - Attendance Administrator
- Tom Buckmaster - Attendance Consultant / Attendance Officer

The team coordinates daily absence follow-up, attendance casework, home-school communication, data review, home visits, support plans, external referrals and liaison with the local authority.

Teachers, phase leaders and all staff

- take and complete registers accurately at the required times;
- notice and report emerging patterns of absence or lateness;
- welcome pupils back positively after absence;
- reinforce consistent attendance messages and help pupils feel connected to school;
- share relevant attendance concerns through the school's safeguarding and pastoral systems; and
- contribute to agreed support plans and reasonable adjustments.

Parents/carers

- ensure their child attends every day the school is open, on time and ready to learn, unless there is a lawful reason for absence;
- notify the school promptly of unexpected absence and provide the reason;
- keep contact and emergency information up to date;
- work with school and other services where barriers to attendance are identified;
- make medical and dental appointments outside school hours where reasonably possible; and
- request any leave of absence in advance and provide relevant information to support the request.

Pupils

- attend regularly, arrive on time and be ready to learn;
- tell a trusted adult if something is making it difficult to attend or arrive on time; and
- engage with support and attendance plans in an age-appropriate way.

4. School day, registration and punctuality

Item	Morning	Afternoon	How it is recorded
School/session starts	9:00am	1:15pm	Pupils should be present when the register is taken
Register closes	9:30am	1:45pm	Maximum 30-minute registration window for each session
Late before register closes	After 9:00am	After 1:15pm	Code L - late but present
Arrival after register closes	After 9:30am	After 1:45pm	Code U, unless another absence code is more appropriate
School day ends	3:30pm		32.5 hours per week

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:55am so that they are settled and ready for registration at 9:00am. The attendance register is a legal record and is taken electronically at the same time for all pupils in each session. It is kept open for no longer than 30 minutes. Children who arrive late will be given a “I am registered” card in order for the register to be marked accordingly.

Persistent lateness is monitored. Where patterns emerge, the school will work with pupils and parents/carers to understand the cause and agree support. Repeated late arrival after the register closes counts as unauthorised absence and can contribute to the national penalty notice threshold.

5. Reporting and responding to absence

What parents/carers must do

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence, preferably before 8:55am, and give the reason and expected return date.
- Continue to update school if the absence lasts longer than first expected or where school asks for daily contact.
- Tell school promptly if contact details change.
- Provide any further information reasonably requested where school needs to understand or accurately code the absence.

What school will do

- Identify unexplained absence at each registration session.
- Make first-day contact by telephone, text, email or other agreed method where no reason has been provided.
- Where contact is unsuccessful or the explanation does not provide sufficient reassurance, make further safeguarding enquiries, which may include contacting emergency contacts, relevant professionals and/or completing a safe and well home visit.
- Record the reason for absence using the appropriate national attendance code once established.
- Where absence continues or a pattern emerges, speak with the pupil and family early to understand barriers and agree support.

Safeguarding: Unexplained or unexpected absence can be a safeguarding concern. Attendance procedures operate alongside the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence from the register. A parent/carer's explanation does not automatically mean that an absence will be authorised. The school will apply the national attendance codes and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Examples of absence that may be authorised or otherwise recorded lawfully

- illness, where the pupil is unable to attend;
- medical or dental appointments that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours;
- a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs;
- leave of absence granted in advance for one of the permitted circumstances, including exceptional circumstances;
- approved educational activity, dual registration, local-authority-arranged provision, approved sporting activity, educational visits or work experience, where the relevant statutory criteria are met;
- circumstances where the pupil is unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause covered by the regulations; and
- suspension or permanent exclusion while the pupil remains on roll, where the relevant code applies.

Examples of unauthorised absence

- no explanation has been provided;
- the reason provided does not meet the criteria for an authorised absence;
- holiday or leisure/recreation in term time that has not been authorised as exceptional leave;
- shopping, birthdays, looking after other children or routine family events;
- arriving after the register has closed without another lawful reason for absence; or
- remaining absent beyond the period of leave granted by the school.

7. Illness, medical appointments and medical evidence

Parents/carers should keep a child at home when they are too ill to attend and should notify school on the first day. School staff do not diagnose or treat medical or mental health conditions, but will work with families and relevant services to support regular attendance.

The school will not routinely require medical evidence for ordinary illness absence and will not operate a blanket rule requiring it. In most cases, a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend can be accepted. Reasonable evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason for absence, or where prolonged or repeated illness means the school needs a better understanding of the pupil's needs and the support or reasonable adjustments required.

Where evidence is necessary, the school will be flexible about its form. This may include appointment information, prescriptions, medication packaging or correspondence from health professionals where already available. Parents will not normally be asked to obtain unnecessary additional medical appointments solely to prove illness.

Where a pupil is expected to miss, or has missed, 15 school days because of sickness either consecutively or cumulatively in the current school year, the school will make the required sickness return to the local authority and work with the local authority to consider continuity of education.

8. Pupils with SEND, health needs, young carers and other vulnerabilities

High expectations for attendance apply to every pupil. Some pupils, however, face greater barriers and may require additional support or reasonable adjustments. The school will consider individual circumstances and its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

SEND and long-term physical or mental health needs

- work in partnership with the pupil and family to understand individual needs and barriers;
- put in-school support and reasonable adjustments in place, including adjustments to routines, uniform, transport, access to support and lunchtime arrangements where appropriate;
- ensure provision in an Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed and liaise with the local authority if attendance falls or barriers relate to the pupil's needs;
- consider a time-limited phased return where this is in the pupil's best interests and forms part of a wider support or reintegration plan; and
- review the impact of support regularly and adapt it when needed.

Young carers, pupils with a social worker and looked-after children

- Young carers will be identified and recorded in line with census requirements. Where caring responsibilities affect attendance, school will work with the family and local authority to facilitate appropriate support.
- Where a pupil has a social worker and/or youth offending team worker, school will share relevant unexplained absence information with that professional in line with statutory expectations and safeguarding requirements.
- Attendance of looked-after children will be monitored closely and school will liaise with the relevant Virtual School and local authority teams.

9. Leave of absence and exceptional circumstances

There is no general entitlement to leave of absence during term time. Parents/carers who wish to request leave must apply in advance to the Headteacher, normally using the school's leave of absence form. Where possible, requests should be submitted at least 20 school days before the proposed absence so there is time for the circumstances to be considered and a written response provided.

The Headteacher will consider every application individually, taking account of the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context. The school will not operate blanket rules that automatically grant leave for particular events or circumstances. If leave is granted, the school will decide the number of days authorised.

A need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure and recreation is not generally considered an exceptional circumstance. Leave will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Religious observance

Absence will be recorded as authorised for a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. If a religious body sets apart one day but a family wishes to take additional days, any additional time must be considered separately as a leave of absence request.

If leave is taken without permission

Any leave taken without permission, or beyond the period granted, will be recorded as unauthorised. The school must consider whether the National Framework for Penalty Notices applies when the national threshold is met.

10. Part-time timetables and remote education

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and is needed to meet individual needs. It will not be used to manage behaviour.

- the school and the parent with whom the pupil normally lives must agree the arrangement;
- there must be a clear ambition for return to full-time education;
- the timetable must form part of a wider support, health care or reintegration plan;
- it must have regular review dates involving the pupil and parent/carer;
- it must be in place for the shortest time necessary and have a proposed end date;
- the social worker will be kept informed where the pupil has one; and
- where the pupil has an EHCP, the arrangement will be discussed with the local authority.

Remote education

Remote education does not count as attendance at school. Where a pupil is absent and receiving remote education, the appropriate absence code must still be used. Remote education will only be considered as a last resort, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, and as part of a wider plan to support return to school.

11. Monitoring, analysis and use of attendance data

The school uses attendance data proactively to identify patterns and intervene before absence becomes entrenched. The school's current strategy includes daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annual analysis at individual, class, year-group, whole-school and cohort level.

- Daily: unexplained absence, first-day response, punctuality and immediate safeguarding concerns.
- Weekly: pupils whose attendance is declining; pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence; class/year-group patterns; and priority casework.
- Half-termly/termly: trend analysis, code patterns, days of weak attendance, the impact of interventions and key cohorts.
- Annually: self-evaluation, benchmarking and review of strategy, resources, policy and staff training.

Cohort analysis will reflect the school's context and may include SEND, pupils with long-term health needs, pupils with a social worker, looked-after pupils, young carers, pupils eligible for free school meals or pupil premium, EAL, year groups and any other groups with lower attendance than peers.

The school will benchmark attendance against local, regional and national data, and where appropriate comparable schools, and will report relevant trends and the impact of improvement work to governors.

12. Graduated attendance support and persistent/severe absence

Priory Junior School follows a graduated approach consistent with its Attendance Strategy: relationships first, with support intensifying as absence becomes more serious.

Stage	What school will do	Examples
Expect & monitor	Set clear expectations and monitor attendance closely.	Consistent messages, daily registration, weekly data review, praise and recognition.
Listen & understand	Speak with the pupil and family as soon as a pattern emerges.	Parent meeting, pupil voice, identifying in-school and wider barriers.
Facilitate support	Remove barriers in school and help the family access wider help.	Mentoring, welfare help, SEND/pastoral support, Early Help, transport/housing support.
Formalise support	Where voluntary support is not enough or is not engaged with, agree a more formal plan.	Attendance agreement/contract, formal meeting, local authority involvement, Notice to Improve where appropriate.
Enforce where necessary	Use statutory intervention only where support is not appropriate, has not worked or has not been engaged with.	Penalty notice, Education Supervision Order or prosecution through the local authority, depending on the case.

Persistent absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions. School will prioritise pupils who are at risk of reaching, or have reached, this level and will agree targeted actions with pupils and families. Support will be reviewed for impact rather than relying on a fixed sequence of letters or sanctions.

Severe absence

A pupil is severely absent when they miss 50% or more of possible sessions. These cases will receive intensive, multi-agency support. Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school will consider the need for statutory children's social care involvement and will work closely with the local authority.

13. Home visits and safeguarding

Home visits are used to understand barriers to attendance, maintain dialogue with families and complete safe and well checks where necessary. They form part of the school's wider attendance and safeguarding response.

- Visits may be planned through attendance review meetings or arranged reactively in response to absence or at the Headteacher discretion.
- Attendance staff will carry identification, follow the school's lone working and personal safety procedures and keep the school informed of their location.
- If nobody is present, the officer may make appropriate enquiries and leave a visit card.
- Staff will not enter a property where they feel unsafe and will withdraw from any situation that presents a risk.

- Agreements and relevant information from the visit will be recorded on the pupil's attendance/pastoral record and followed up.

The separate Home Visit Policy for the Attendance Team provides the detailed operational and staff-safety procedures.

14. Working with the local authority and other partners

The school will work with Nottinghamshire County Council's School Attendance Support Team and other agencies through regular targeting support arrangements and individual casework where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

- share required admission and attendance information with the local authority;
- make attendance returns for pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or who have been absent for a continuous 10 school days where the absence is recorded with unauthorised codes G, N, O and/or U;
- make sickness returns where code I absence is expected to reach 15 days consecutively or cumulatively in the school year;
- share relevant information with health, social care, youth offending, Early Help, SEND and other partners where this supports the pupil and is lawful; and
- work collaboratively with other schools, especially where siblings attend different schools or during transition.

15. Legal intervention and penalty notices

Legal intervention is not a substitute for support. The school will use a support-first approach and will consider formal or legal action where support is not appropriate, has not been successful, or has not been engaged with.

National threshold

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions can be consecutive or non-consecutive, can be made up of different types of unauthorised absence, and the 10-week period can span terms or school years.

When the threshold is met, the school must consider the individual case rather than operate a blanket rule. This includes considering whether support is appropriate, whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance, and any relevant Equality Act duties.

Notice to Improve

Where support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve will usually be considered before a penalty notice. Where used, the improvement period will normally be between 3 and 6 weeks and will set out what improvement is required and the support available.

Penalty notice amounts and repeat offences

- First penalty notice for a parent in respect of a particular pupil: £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within a rolling 3-year period: £160, payable within 28 days with no reduced rate.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first. Alternative action, which may include prosecution, must be considered instead.

Penalty notices in Nottinghamshire are requested/issued in line with Nottinghamshire County Council's current Code of Conduct. A penalty notice may also be considered before the national threshold where the local code permits this and the circumstances justify it.

Term-time holiday: Where the national threshold is met through unauthorised term-time holiday, support may not be appropriate and a penalty notice may be considered without a Notice to Improve, subject to the statutory framework and local code.

16. Admission register, children missing education and record retention

The school's admission and attendance registers are kept electronically. Attendance is recorded using the national codes. Register entries are legal records and will be retained for 6 years from the date the data was entered. Any amendment must preserve the original entry and record the amended entry, reason, date and person making the amendment.

A pupil's name will only be removed from the admission register where a lawful ground in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies. The school will not remove a pupil from roll simply because they have been absent for a set number of days.

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown or absence raises concerns that the child may be missing education, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures and statutory children missing education processes, including timely liaison with the local authority. Parents/carers must keep school informed of address, contact and destination-school changes.

17. Promoting good attendance

Priory Junior School promotes attendance through its PRIDE ethos, strong relationships, an engaging curriculum, enrichment, pupil leadership, welfare support and clear communication with families. The school will celebrate attendance and improvement sensitively and in a way that does not discriminate against pupils who face genuine barriers.

- daily meet-and-greet and positive welcome back after absence;
- weekly communication of attendance messages and class-level information;
- recognition of high and improved attendance and punctuality;
- Junior Attendance Officers and pupil voice;
- practical welfare help such as breakfast provision and support with barriers including uniform, food, transport or housing applications where available; and
- attendance as a routine part of parent meetings and home-school communication.

18. Policy publication, review and complaints

This policy will be published on the school website, shared with families when pupils join the school, and highlighted at the start of each academic year and whenever it is materially updated.

Attendance barriers and statutory guidance can change quickly. The policy will therefore be reviewed at least annually and earlier where required. The school will seek pupil and parent/carer views as part of review and improvement work.

Questions or concerns about attendance should be raised with the school as early as possible. Complaints about the application of this policy will be handled through the school's Complaints Policy.

Key references

- Department for Education (July 2026), Working together to improve school attendance: statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Nottinghamshire County Council, School attendance and the law; Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.
- Priory Junior School Attendance Strategy; Attendance Guidance for Parents and Carers; Home Visit Policy for Attendance Team.

Appendix A: Parent/carers quick guide

What you need to know	Priory Junior School expectation
Arrival	Arrive by 8:55am; morning registration is at 9:00am.
Late mark	Arrival after 9:00am but before 9:30am is late (L).
After register closes	Arrival after 9:30am is recorded as unauthorised absence (U) unless another code applies.
Reporting absence	Contact school as soon as possible on the first day, preferably before 8:55am.
Illness evidence	Usually not required for ordinary illness; may be requested where there is genuine doubt or recurring/prolonged illness.
Appointments	Arrange outside school hours where possible; provide appointment information if requested.
Leave in term time	Apply in advance. Holidays/leisure are not normally exceptional circumstances.
Persistent absence	Missing 10% or more of sessions.
Penalty notice threshold	10 unauthorised sessions in a rolling 10 school weeks.
Help with attendance	Contact the class teacher, school office or Attendance Team early so support can be put in place.

Appendix B: 2026-27 update summary for governors

Area	2026-27 change
Statutory guidance reference	Updated from the 2024 edition to DfE Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026.
Registration	Clarified that registers are taken at the same time for all pupils and are open for a maximum of 30 minutes; school timings standardised to 9:00-9:30am and 1:15-1:45pm.
Medical evidence	Removed blanket-style expectations. Evidence is now described as exceptional and proportionate, consistent with 2026 guidance.

Data and cohorts	Expanded benchmarking and cohort analysis, explicitly including young carers and early identification before PA.
Health/SEND	Strengthened reasonable adjustments, phased return and joined-up support expectations.
Leave of absence	Made clear that applications must be individual and the school must not operate automatic/blanket approvals; retained the school's advance-request process as a planning expectation rather than an absolute bar.
Religious observance	Removed the previous generic 'up to 3 days' statement and aligned wording to statutory Code R criteria.
Remote education	Added that remote education remains absence and should be last resort within a reintegration plan.
Part-time timetables	Updated to the 2026 criteria: very exceptional, agreed with parent, time-limited, regularly reviewed, end date, not used to manage behaviour.
Local authority returns	Added 10-day unauthorised attendance returns and 15-day sickness returns.
Penalty notices	Updated national threshold, Notice to Improve approach, two-notice/three-year limit and current £80/£160 rates.
Admission register	Removed outdated wording suggesting automatic roll deletion after 20 days; deletion now tied to the statutory 2024 Regulations.
School strategy	Embedded the existing relationships-first, graduated support, home visit and data-driven approach.
Headteacher signature / date	
Attendance Governor / Chair / date	