

Priors Hall – a learning community

Attendance Policy

2023 - 2024



'Ready for Learning, Ready for Life'



Curiosity



Kindness



Resilience



Respect

Adopted: July 2023

Review Date: June 2024

Introduction

Regular attendance is important, any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Supreme Court has given its judgement on the meaning of what is meant by "attend regularly" at school for the purposes of section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court decided that "regularly" meant "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

Therefore, it is the expectation that all children attending Priors Hall – a learning community attend every day the school is open.

1. Aims

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Priors Hall – A Learning Community to support pupil attendance at school.

2. Overview

No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers and pupils to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with their skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of the communities.

3. COVID – 19

School is now statutory for all children.

4. Expectations

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework

- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school
- To ensure that they contact the School Office by telephone before 8.40 am to advise the school if their child will not be attending school that day and the reason why.

5. Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes. If the school cannot get hold of a named contact for the child and does not have a reason for absence, the attendance officer and a DSL or DSO will complete a home visit welfare check. If we still cannot get hold of the family, we may follow our school's safeguarding procedures. This could involve requesting a police welfare check or contacting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, the Headteacher or Attendance Officer may telephone the families concerned or invite parents/carers to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

5.1 Recording Pupil Attendance and Absence

To ensure children's safety, and help us meet Government guidelines, we request that parents contact the school before 8.40 am on the first day of absence to inform us of their children's absence. Parent/carers are required to call in to inform us about any children absent for any reason. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for. If school cannot make contact with any of the people on the contact list, a home visit will be made.

If Your Child is Absent:

- Parent/carers are required to contact the School Reception Office on the day of the absence, by 8.40am informing them of the reason for absence.
- Each reason will be recorded on the child's registration document.
- The parents/carers are required to contact the school EVERY day the child is absent.
- If parents/carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to speak to anyone about the child's absence, the school will conduct a home visit to check the child is safe.

If your child needs to be taken out of school for any reason during the school day, please notify the school in advance and notify one of the office staff when taking the child out and

on return. You will be asked to sign your child in and out. This will ensure the safety of your child at all times.

Any absences not explained will be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents/carers to telephone about an absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc, the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) being issued.

When a pupil is late into school, i.e. after 8.45 am for the morning session, parents are required to sign in the pupil at Reception on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register.

It is essential that your contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents/carers change either address or phone numbers then these details are communicated to the office so that our records can be amended.

5.2 Absence Management

It is the school that authorise absence. Parents/carers provide a reason for children being absent from school. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not.

North Northamptonshire council may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to each Parent or Carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 per child per parent for those paying within 28 days.

Priors Hall – a learning community follows the North Northamptonshire LA School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct to ensure consistent approach across the school.

Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the pupil concerned (not of the parent or another family member)
- A medical or dental appointment
- For the purpose of religious observation
- It is an educational event/trip
- Family bereavements
- Fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will not be authorised by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence but the issue persists, the school may request the parent to provide evidence or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the parent; this change should be communicated to the parent in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

Holidays and requests for a leave of absence during term time

We advise parents that Priors Hall – a learning community follows the guidance which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>.

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This, however, will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday under any circumstances.

Parents who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a leave of absence form and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out by the Northamptonshire Local Authority. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days, and £120 per child per parent if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstance:

- Shopping trips
- Family holidays in term time
- Minding the house or looking after siblings
- Lateness after 8.45am when the registers have been taken
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified
- No reason given
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid

Attendance Monitoring

Attendance of all pupils is monitored by Priors Hall – a learning community administration staff and the Headteacher. On a weekly basis, every child's attendance is considered, and an overall percentage figure is created based on attendance during this academic year.

Priors Hall – a Learning Community applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Two separate absences in a 6-week period or below 96%

Parents will be contacted with a phone call to outline the decline in attendance. All absences and their reasons are tracked by administration staff. **The phone call will be made following two or more illness absences within a 6-week period or attendance drops below 96%.**

Attendance Below 93% or after another absence following a phone call home (see above)

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix 1 – attendance letter 1) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via a member of the school's Pastoral Lead or SLT (Senior Leadership Team). The letter will be sent following further absences within a 6-week period. All absences and their reasons are tracked by administration staff.

Attendance of 90% or Less

Parents will be contacted with a letter requesting a meeting with the Assistant Head/Phase Lead for that year group (see Appendix 2 – attendance letter 2) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family. A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be 'persistently absent' according to the Government's expectations of attendance. This meeting will be recorded and attendance will be reviewed following four weeks. If attendance has not improved a meeting with the Headteacher will be arranged.

Attendance of 85% or below

If a child's attendance reaches this level, parents/carers will be invited into a meeting with the Headteacher outlining the School's concerns. (see Appendix 3 – attendance letter 3) Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure, an action plan/parent contract could be set up and parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. Attendance monitoring will continue and if attendance still does not improve, the council will be informed and if necessary, become involved to improve attendance.

The school will request where necessary medical evidence to support the reasons for failing to attend school.

Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Prosecutions

Any unauthorised leave of absence of ten consecutive sessions (5 consecutive days) will be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice. Persistent absence/lateness will result in a warning letter being issued to each parent (Appendix 4).

If there is no improvement to the attendance for that child, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued by North Northamptonshire council, which will result in a fine of £60 per parent per child, if paid within 21 days increasing to (£120 if paid within 28 days).

For the standard Section 444(1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 85% with some unauthorised in the last 4 weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as the 'aggravated offence', a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the parent/carer to have knowledge of this offence.

If the issuing of warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement, North Northamptonshire Council attendance officers will be contacted. At this stage, documentary evidence of the interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, a FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. If the school would prefer a prosecution, and a warning letter had been sent, then North Northamptonshire Council will write to the parent/carer(s) and invite them to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, a review will be planned. However, if there is no improvement then parents will be written to again and invited to a PACE Interview. Information will be given at the Attendance Interview about the PACE Interview and the parent(s) right to legal representation.

The PACE Interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to Local Authorities by the Department for Education. A police caution will be given to the parent(s) in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court. A North Northamptonshire Council officer will inform the parents of the court date and write a Section 9 statement based upon the PACE interview and other supporting information, which has been provided by the school and/or other agencies. This 'court pack' will be sent to parents two weeks prior to any legal proceedings.

5.3 Punctuality

Start of the School Day

The playground gates are opened at 8.35 am. The classroom doors are open at 8.35am and the children come straight into class. The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.45am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked late on the register, the register closes at 8.50am.

School will notify parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late.

North Northamptonshire Council may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the registers has closed. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent (for those that settle with 21 days) and £120 per child per parent (for those who pay within 28 days). The school works with the guidelines set out in the Northamptonshire School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

Punctuality

Priors Hall – A Learning Community actively discourages late arrival at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Priors Hall – A Learning Community applies the following procedure in deciding how to deal with individual concerns about punctuality.

Parents/Carers will be contacted by phone to outline the decline in punctuality and the offer of support to the family via our pastoral lead and SLT. If this continues a letter will be sent (see Appendix 5 – punctuality letter 1). Should the punctuality figure continue to drop a further letter will be sent (see Appendix 6 – punctuality letter 2)

Missed Sessions

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the missed sessions/punctuality, this may result in a fine from North Northamptonshire Council. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within in 21 days, it will rise to. (£120 if paid within 28 days).

6. School Organisation

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff.

Parents/Carers

Priors Hall – A Learning Community expects parents/carers to:

- Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this.
- Support their child and the school achieving maximum attendance

Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation

offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised. Authorised absences can only be agreed by the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those missed sessions that the Headteacher does not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. The Government makes it very clear that Headteachers are not to authorise any term time absences unless for very exceptional circumstances.

Other Circumstances - Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstance, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

Ensuring Pupil Information is Up-to-Date

School will ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 state 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'. The School Office will send out Data Collection sheets every academic year.

Parents are asked to:

1. Amend the Data Collection Sheet with any information that has changes or is incorrect
2. Sign the Data Collection Sheet at the bottom to let us know that you have seen it
3. Return the Data Collection Sheet to the School Office.

Changes can also be requested through the MCAS APP at any time or through the school office.

Safeguarding Statement

Safeguarding is everybody's business. Priors Hall – a Learning Community has an unwavering commitment to safeguarding to ensure that: all our children and young people are safe and feel safe; that children, parents/carers and staff are able to talk about any safeguarding concerns and feel assured that they will be listened to; and that all staff and volunteers are aware of and implement safeguarding procedures and guidance, including what to do if they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of harm. In essence, we instil a culture of vigilance.

All concerns should be given to our school Designated Safeguarding Leads: **Jacqueline White (Assistant Head and DSL), Tess McQuade (Headteacher and DDSL), Justin Pye (Assistant Head and DSO), Charlotte Brazier (Assistant Head and DSO), Calla Haycock-Hall (Pastoral Lead and DSO), Alex Crawford (Nursery Lead Teacher and DSO), Lucy Nisbet (SENDCo and DSO).**

- In any case where an adult is concerned that a child is, or may be, at risk of significant harm they must report this immediately to the DSL or to a member of the Safeguarding Team who will make a referral directly to Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0300 126 7000**.
- If a child or other person is at immediate risk of harm, the first response should always be to call the police on **999**. This policy applies to all adults, including volunteers, working in or on behalf of Priors Hall – a Learning Community.
- If a concern is in relation to a member of staff at Priors Hall (who is not the Headteacher), please contact Tess McQuade on **01536 216090** to report this concern.
- If a concern is in relation to the Headteacher, please contact the Chair of Governor (Sue Gardner) via email on sgardner@iftl.co.uk or IFTL Safeguarding Lead (Victoria Blackmore) via email on vblackmore@iftl.co.uk.

Appendix 1
Attendance letter 1- Low Attendance



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Following our phone call dated _____ we are writing to you as it has been recognised that XXXXXXXX has had further absences, resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

When attendance goes below 90% this is classed as persistent absence and parents/carers may be invited to an attendance meeting to discuss the reasons for low attendance. We always record the reason for absences and take this into consideration.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Priors Hall – A Learning Community.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised and this will affect your child's attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day, we can work with you and your family, so please contact the school office to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Administrator

Appendix 2 –

Attendance Letter 2 – Attendance below 90%



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Following our letter dated _____ we are writing to you as it has been recognised that XXXXXXXX attendance remains low resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Priors Hall – A Learning Community.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

We invite you in to school to attend a meeting to discuss the reason for your child's persistent absence on _____ with

Please can you confirm your attendance to info@priorshallalc.com

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Administrator

Appendix 3 –

Attendance Letter 3 – Attendance below 85%



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Following our attendance meeting on _____ we are writing to you as it has been recognised that XXXXXXXX attendance has not improved resulting in an attendance rate of _____%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Priors Hall – A Learning Community.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child's attendance record.

We invite you in to school to attend a meeting to discuss our concerns and draw up a parent contract, where agreed, on _____ with

Please can you confirm your attendance to info@priorshallalc.com

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 4 –
Attendance Administrator

Fixed Penalty Warning Letter



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

I write to advise you that you could face a legal sanction if you fail to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

During the period to the school was open for sessions and XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX attended on _____ and or was late after the registration on _____ occasions.
Your child's overall attendance is _____%.

Section 7 of the Education Act, 1996 states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child's regular attendance at school; therefore, if your child's attendance does not improve the matter will be referred to the Council who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean, under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to you and a fine of £60 per parent per child will become payable in 21 days or £120 per parent per child will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. A Notice could be issued three weeks after the date of this letter, if there is no improvement in your child's attendance or punctuality. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) school weeks as set out in the Northamptonshire Code of Conduct for their issue.

Alternatively, the Council will write to invite you to an Attendance Interview at your child's school. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence, and you will be invited to a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates' court under section 444(1a) Education Act 1996: if

Appendix 5 –

convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an “aggravated” offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Administrator

Punctuality Letter 1



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you following our phone call on _____ that XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX arrived late _____ last term.

Arriving late to school is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning. I would like to clarify that our school gates and classroom doors open at 8.35am for your child to arrive at school.

Registration and early morning work takes place from 8.35am to 8.45am. When a child arrives after the school gate is closed at 8.45am, they need to come through the main reception to be signed in with an explanation given for the lateness and will receive a late mark.

Should you have any problems getting your child to school then we can work together to ensure your child gains the most from their school day.

Appendix 6 –

Please contact the School Office should you wish to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Administrator

Punctuality Letter 2



Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you as a follow up from our previous letter _____ in which we were highlighting your child's lateness to school. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX has now been late _____ times, totalling _____ minutes of lost learning.

Arriving late to class is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning. I would like to clarify that our school gates and classroom doors open at 8.35am for your child to arrive in school.

Registration and early morning work takes place from 8.35am to 8.45am, if your child arrives after 8.45am, they need to come through the main reception to be signed in with an explanation given for the lateness and will receive a late mark.

Appendix 7 –

We have wrap around care onsite from 8.00am should this be easier for you. Please contact the School Office to get more information.

Should your child continue to keep arriving late to school then you will be invited in to discuss this matter. This will now be monitored over the coming weeks.

If you have any issues regarding this, or have any problems getting your child to school then please contact us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Administrator