

Monday 7th September,

Dear parent/carers,

As we begin a new academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to set out the academy's approach to attendance, and outline the Department for Education (DfE)'s attendance guidance.

The DfE's guidance identifies that pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. The government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (a child is considered to be persistently absent if their attendance drops below 90%). In the event that you have any concerns about your child attending the academy, please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss available support. Through working together, we can achieve the best outcomes for your child.

The table below shows the number of days' absence over a year that equate to each percentage absence.

Percentage Attendance	Approximate number of days absent (per year)
95%	10 x days; 20 x sessions (2 x weeks)
90%	19 x days; 38 x sessions (nearly 4 x weeks)
85%	29 x days; 58 x sessions (nearly 6 x weeks)

As an academy, our aspiration for all pupils is that their attendance is 100%, in order for them to get the best from their learning. I understand that there may be times when absence is unavoidable. However, where it is avoidable, I ask that you work with the academy and ensure your child(ren) is/are in school.

In line with the DfE National Framework, penalty notices can be used by all schools where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g., 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g., 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g., 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g., 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 sessions within the Autumn Term of the next academic year).

Please be aware that the threshold does not just apply where an unauthorised holiday is taken, but where a child has any unauthorised absence that equates to 10 sessions in 10 school weeks. Each academy day has 2 sessions

(AM and PM), so under the DfE's system if a child has the equivalent of 5 x days of unauthorised absence in 10 school weeks, then the threshold will have been met. This means that your child may have an attendance of 97%, but if they've had 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks, they will have met the threshold for consideration of a penalty notice.

Please be aware that the DfE National Framework sets out the following with regards to a penalty notice:

Penalty Notice	Details
First Penalty Notice in a 3-year period:	Issued to each parent. Charged at £80 if paid within 21 days. £160 if paid within 28 days.
Second Penalty Notice in a 3-year period:	Issued to each parent. Charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
Third Penalty Notice in a 3-year period:	Alternative action should be taken, for example, prosecution or other attendance legal interventions. Fines per parent are capped at two within any three-year period. If a parent is prosecuted for their child's non-attendance, they could face a magistrate's court appearance and a fine of up to £2,500 and/or prison.

If your child is unable to attend the academy, please ensure that you notify us as soon as possible. (For medical appointments/family bereavements etc.) Complete a 'Leave of absence form' found at our main reception or at the end of the Attendance Policy and submit this to the Admin Team/Student Reception email at: **pembrokeAdmin@prioryacademies.co.uk** or it can be passed to our receptionist. This is to be completed before the absence takes place. If your child's absence goes beyond one day, we need to be contacted on each subsequent day of absence. In the event that your child is absent from the academy and we do not receive a reason for this absence, we will code the absence as unauthorised and your child's attendance may reach the threshold for consideration of a penalty notice.

Our Attendance Policy can be found on our website (Trust Policies – Attendance), or you can use this [link](#). The policy outlines who you can contact for support with attendance.

I would like to draw your attention to the following government legislation:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school, the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act.
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled, Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Penalty.

Punctuality to school is also vitally important. Pupils who arrive late to the academy have an unsettled start to the day and this can disrupt their own learning, as well as that of their peers. In addition, punctuality is a key life skill, that we are keen to promote and reinforce. As a result, persistent lateness will be challenged, and sanctioned where appropriate. I would urge you to contact the academy if you feel you would benefit from any support around this.

We encourage scheduling medical appointments outside of school hours, but we do understand that it is not always feasible. If an appointment is required during the school day, please take only the essential time away from school to minimise disruptions to your child's education.

If your child is unwell, and you are unsure about sending them to the academy, then the following NHS website may be a useful reference point: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)

You will also find some guidance at the end of this letter about how we can work together to support your child's attendance in different circumstances.

In respect of holidays during term time, in line with our [Attendance Policy](#) and the DfE guidance, the academy can grant a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances at our discretion. Parents/Carers who believe they have exceptional circumstances must make a request for a leave of absence to the Headteacher no less than one month prior to the holiday (a form can be obtained from the academy reception). If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the academy to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

If the circumstances are not considered to be exceptional, and permission to take a term-time holiday is not granted by the Headteacher but the holiday is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and your child's attendance may reach the threshold for consideration of a penalty notice.

I would like to thank you for your continued support with your child(ren)'s education.

Yours sincerely

Miss Empson
Designated Safeguarding Lead and Assistant Head Teacher

Supporting your child to attend the academy

Situation	What can be done to help?
Your child is feeling sick/unwell, e.g., they have a cough, cold, headache	• Please check the NHS site for guidance: Is my child too ill for school? - NHS • Ring the academy to let us know and we can monitor your child and provide support if needed • Please give them doses of recommended medicine prior to them coming to the academy (as advised) • If your child is diagnosed with migraines, please inform us
Your child has a physical injury	• Please ring the academy to let us know, and we can agree a support plan
Your child has headlice and/or nits	• Please treat your child's hair with a medical shampoo and ring the academy to inform us
Your child has sunburn	• Please apply an appropriate after-sun cream and ring the academy so appropriate support can be agreed
Your child is tired after participating in an activity at the weekend/out-of-school	• Please ring the academy to let us know and we can monitor your child and provide support if needed
Your child is refusing to attend	• Please ring the academy to speak with the house team/Inclusion Officer of your child as soon as possible, so that appropriate support can be discussed
Lack of uniform or item is missing/broken	• The academy has spare uniform which can be provided so that your child does not have to miss learning – please ring the academy to discuss