

17 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to share some important information about attendance and the processes we will be following at The Priory School.

Our priority is to work positively with students and their families to support good attendance, recognising that there can be a range of reasons why a child may struggle to attend school regularly. At the same time, schools have legal responsibilities around attendance and we must ensure that we follow the Government's statutory guidance. It is therefore important that families understand both the support that The Priory School will provide and the actions we are required to take.

The Department for Education has established a national approach to attendance which schools and local authorities are required to follow. While we can determine how we support students and families within our school, we cannot choose whether to follow the national attendance framework or set the level of any penalty notice. Our aim is to balance our responsibility to support children and families with our legal responsibility to monitor attendance, follow up absence and take appropriate action where required.

Why attendance matters?

If students are to achieve their potential, good attendance and punctuality are critical. The link between attendance and achievement is well documented. Figures from the Department for Education demonstrate this very clearly. We want all our students to achieve the very best examination results that they can. Irregular attendance, can, however, have a significant impact on student achievement. Students with irregular attendance:

- Get behind with work
- Lose the thread of the topics being taught
- Become demotivated on return to school
- Lose friendships
- Miss out on important careers and guidance inputs
- Miss out on extra curricular opportunities
- Are less likely to feel part of the school
- Year 10 and 11 students need to be aware the colleges with request attendance date for the last two year. Poor attendance can result in your child not being successful in their application or being advised to enrol on a lower level course.

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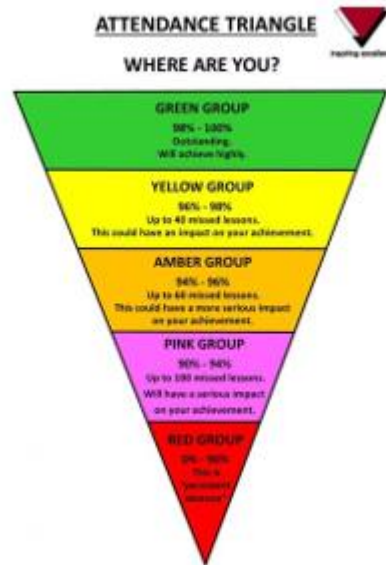




What is good attendance?

Parents/carers and students often become confused about what good attendance is. In discussions with the Educational Welfare Service, The Priory has introduced the following guide for parents:

- 98% – 100% outstanding
- 96% – 98% excellent
- 94% – 96%
- 90% – 94% cause for concern
- Below 90% serious cause for concern.



It should be remembered that 90% attendance is equivalent to one day of absence every fortnight. Over an academic year this amounts to four weeks of absence (100 lessons missed!)

Punctuality

Parents/carers are also responsible for ensuring that their son/daughter arrives at school punctually. School starts at 8.55am each day and students are late if they are not in their tutor class by 8.55am. We will contact you if we have concerns about punctuality and ask that you support our detention procedures re: student lateness.

Our attendance process

Our attendance process will follow a staged approach, allowing opportunities for communication, support and intervention before more formal action is considered:

- Episode 1: Form Tutor phone call
- Episode 2: Attendance Team phone call
- Episode 3: Head of Year meeting and, where appropriate, an Attendance Contract
- Episode 4: Involvement of the Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team and/or SEND and Inclusion Team where further support or intervention is required
- Episode 5: Review meeting to consider progress and next steps
- Episode 6: Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), where the relevant Government threshold has been met

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- Absences of three consecutive days or more may result on a home visit
- Absence of 5+consecutive day could result in. Your child being reported to Surrey Council as missing from education.
- All attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department of Education

Penalty fine process

The Department for Education has established a national approach to attendance which schools and local authorities are required to follow. While we can determine how we support students and families within our school, we cannot choose whether to follow the national attendance framework or set the level of any penalty notice. Our aim is to balance our responsibility to support children and families with our legal responsibility to monitor attendance, follow up absence and take appropriate action where required. We understand that there are occasions when children are genuinely unable to attend school, and we recognise that some students may experience additional barriers to attendance. If you are worried about your child's attendance, please speak to us as early as possible. Early communication allows us to understand what is happening and consider what support may be appropriate. Our attendance approach is not about punishing families; it is about ensuring that students receive the education, support and opportunities they are entitled to while making sure that we meet the responsibilities placed upon us by Government legislation and guidance.

The Government clearly outlines a national threshold for penalty notices. A penalty notice must be considered when a child has:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period. A school day consists of two sessions, meaning that 10 sessions is equivalent to five school days.
- These absences do not necessarily need to be consecutive.
- For unauthorised term-time holidays, where the absence reaches 10 sessions (5 school days), a penalty notice will be issued in accordance with the national framework.
- The penalty notice structure is set nationally by the Government and is not set by The Priory School:
- First penalty notice: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days
- First penalty notice: £160 per parent, per child if paid between 22 and 28 days
- Second penalty notice for the same child within a three-year period: £160 per parent, per child
- The second penalty notice does not have a reduced-payment period
- A maximum of two penalty notices can be issued to a parent for the same child within a three-year period.
- Where further unauthorised absence occurs after two penalty notices have been issued within the three-year period, alternative legal action may be considered in line with the national framework.

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Holidays Taken in Term Time

The school does not authorise holidays from school during school term-time. Any request for absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher and will only be authorised in extremely exceptional circumstances. If a student is taken out of school for a holiday which has not been authorised by the school, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.

There are also a number of ways that parents and carers can do to support good attendance and help us to work effectively together:

- Ensure your child attends school every day unless their absence is genuinely necessary
- Contact school promptly on the first day of absence and provide an appropriate reason for the absence
- Arrange routine medical and other appointments outside school hours wherever possible
- Do not book holidays during term time
- Speak to us as soon as possible if your child is finding it difficult to attend school
- Engage with support offered by the school and attend meetings when requested
- Encourage your child to develop positive morning and bedtime routines
- Make sure your child arrives at school on time, as punctuality is also monitored
- Keep communication with school open if circumstances at home or barriers to attendance change.

We recognise that good attendance is a shared responsibility between school, students and families. We want to work with parents and carers in a supportive, respectful and understanding way, while also ensuring that we fulfil the legal responsibilities placed upon schools. By working together and addressing concerns early, we can give students the best possible opportunity to attend regularly, access their education and thrive.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs van Zyl

Assistant Headteacher/SENCO

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