

@Hewish
Bristol Road
Hewish
Weston-super-Mare
North Somerset
BS24 6RT

(01934) 832159



@West Wick
1 Scot Elm Drive
West Wick
Weston-super-Mare
North Somerset
BS24 7JU

(01934) 520461

Principal Mrs Emma Hardy-Smith

mailbox@saca.theplt.org.uk

Attendance

Friday 7th September 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we start this new school year, we want to work closely with our families and carers to improve attendance for all children. I am writing to you to share our TPLT attendance strategy and to share attendance expectations.

School attendance is compulsory for all children. The Department for Education's attendance guidance states:

'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school' (Working together to improve school attendance May 2022)

Attendance

If your child is going to be absent from school, you must inform the school office as soon as possible- **no later than 9am**. The attendance team will follow up if they have not received any notice of absence. Phone numbers held on our system will be contacted. If we cannot make contact with anyone to explain a child's absence, a welfare call may be made by the attendance team. If we cannot make contact at all, this could be a safeguarding concern and the police may be called. Non - attendance without explanation is a very serious matter and cannot be ignored by schools. Please support us by always informing us of any absence as soon as you can- ideally before the start of the school day. Please inform the school on each day of your child's absence.

Punctuality

It is very important for attendance that children regularly arrive at school on time. Your child should be ready to start their learning in their classroom by **8:30am at West Wick** and **8:45am at Hewish**. Like many schools, we concentrate on the key skills such as numeracy and literacy at the beginning of the day. Children who are late, can miss this important learning. Children who arrive after the gates have closed must enter through the school office and will be recorded as late. Registers will close **15 minutes after the gates close**. Please note that if your child arrives after the registers have closed (8:45am WW and 9:00am Hewish) they will be recorded as unauthorised. Persistent, severe or unexplained lateness can be classed as **unauthorised absence** and may be referred to the local authority and could result in a penalty fine

The Priory Learning Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales with company number 07698707.
Registered office address: Priory Community School, Queensway, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset, BS22 6BP



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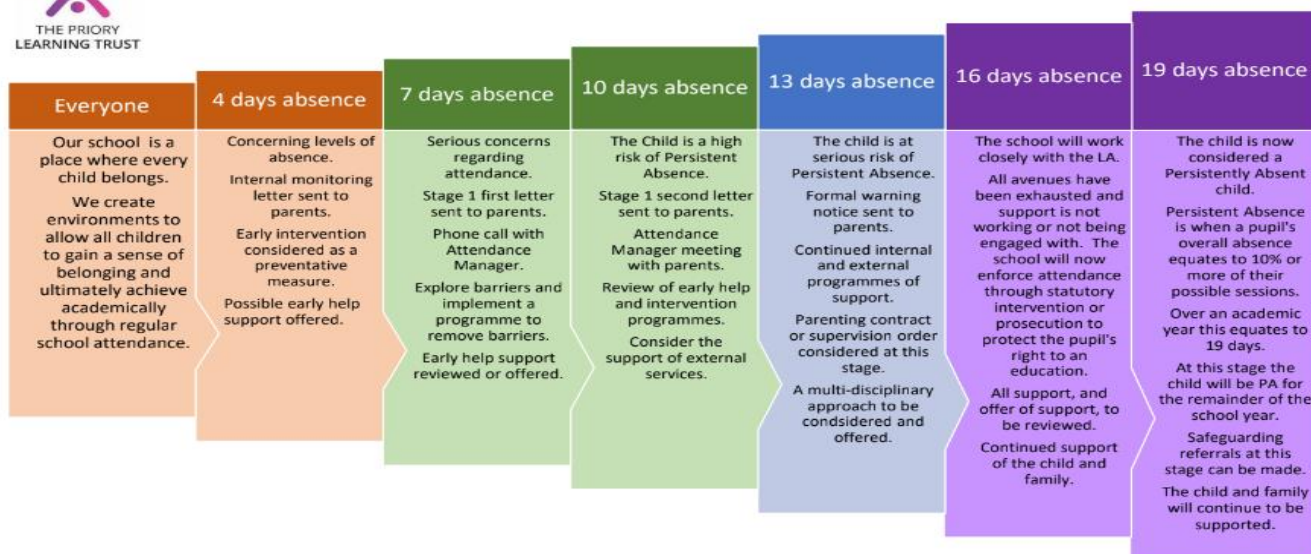
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TPLT Attendance strategy

All schools in the Trust will be following a new Attendance strategy as detailed below. We will be monitoring attendance as days missed rather than as a percentage which we hope will help give everyone clarity over the amount of time children are missing school. Please see the chart below which details the attendance processes that we will be following this year. You will notice that you will receive an initial letter after 4 days of absence and will be invited to have a phone call with the attendance officers after 7 days of absence. The aim of this strategy is support parents and carers to remove barriers to low attendance and will be a supportive and collaborative process. If you receive a letter or are invited to a meeting, please see this as the school wanting to work with you to improve attendance. We fully appreciate that there are many barriers to school attendance including anxiety, mental health difficulties, friendship issues and other concerns. We want to work with you to support school attendance.



EXPECT
A culture where all children can, and want to be in school

MONITOR
Use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance

LISTEN & UNDERSTAND
Understand barriers to attendance, work together to remove them

FACILITATE SUPPORT
Access support to overcome barriers outside of school

FORMALISE SUPPORT
This may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order

ENFORCE
Statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education when there is no other option

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Holidays in term time

There was a high number of holiday requests last year, which resulted in an increasing number of penalty notices being issued by the Local Authority. In order to avoid this happening, it is important to remind you that schools cannot authorise any holiday in term time unless there are truly EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

The law on this is very clear and such absences will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances. A family holiday does not constitute such an exception. Our Trust attendance policy is in line with the DfE's statutory guidance to schools. In almost all cases, a request for a holiday in term time will be refused and if the unauthorised holiday is for 10 or more sessions (i.e. 5 or more full days) it **will** incur a penalty notice.

Holidays which are taken for the following reasons, cannot be authorised:

- parental work commitments;
- family gatherings;
- relatives visiting;
- cheaper holidays in England and abroad;
- avoiding traffic on Fridays;
- family day trips;
- visiting friends/family that have different half terms or holidays;
- because a child has good attendance;
- employment restrictions during the summer holiday.

Penalty Notices

Any requests we receive for term time holidays, for 5 days or more, will result in penalty notices being applied for, as stated on the TPLT Attendance Policy.

Other unauthorised absences amounting to 10 or more sessions (5 days) within a 6 month period will also result in the request for a Penalty Notice, as outlined in the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. The absences do not have to be consecutive.

If a child has been absent and the reason has been reported as illness but the school has reason to believe this is not to be the case and the child/ren are actually attending a family holiday, evidence of illness may be required. If illness cannot be proved, schools may take action by way of a penalty notice.

A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

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1. Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.) Fines are issued by and payable to the Local Authority.

2. Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment. (See DfE's statutory guidance on School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures for more information).

Penalty notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of penalty notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four penalty notices would be issued amounting to £240.

Your support in not taking children on holiday in term time is greatly appreciated. Whilst we acknowledge the challenging times that everyone is facing as the cost of living increases and know that the costs of a holiday are reduced significantly during term time; schools must follow government guidance.

To support families and staff, all academies in The Priory Learning Trust have a two week October holiday to allow families to book a holiday that may be cheaper.

I hope this helps to explain the school's attendance practice. If you do make the decision to take your children on holiday during term time and you receive a penalty fine, please respect that the school is following government guidance. Verbal or written abuse or aggression towards school staff is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. Please be kind and accept the school's attendance policy.

The attendance team will monitor attendance regularly and will contact the parents and carers of children with low attendance as per the attendance strategy above.

Termly attendance newsletters will be issued to keep you updated on attendance matters.

You will find a link to the TPLT Attendance Policy on our website if you require further information.

<https://stanneschurchacademy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Attendance-Policy-2022.pdf>

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Hardy Smith

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