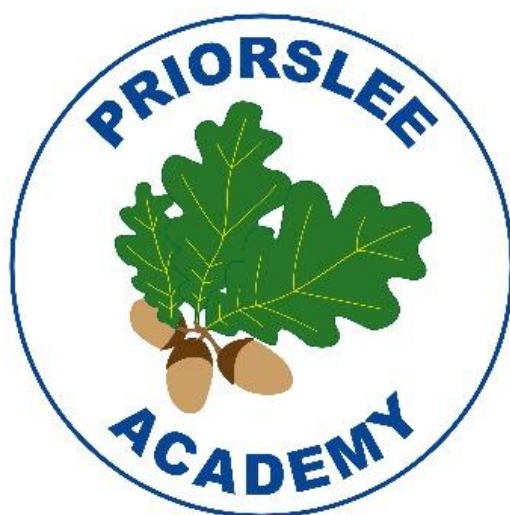


ATTENDANCE POLICY



Policy in effect from:

September 2025

Review Date:

September 2026

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Statement of intent

At Priorslee Academy, we believe that good attendance is key to helping children learn and succeed. We work closely with parent carers, pupils, staff, and outside organisations to support regular school attendance.

Children learn best when they are in school every day and on time. Missing school can affect both their learning and social development. We understand that families can face challenges at times, so we aim to create a safe and supportive environment and build strong relationships with pupils and parent carers to help overcome these barriers.

Everyone in our school community plays a part in encouraging good attendance. We will keep parent carers informed about how attendance affects learning and offer help when attendance becomes a concern.

We promote good attendance through:

- A positive school environment
- Clear behaviour expectations
- Support for bullying and special educational needs
- Pastoral care
- Use of resources like Pupil Premium

We also celebrate and reward pupils who attend regularly.

Our goal is to make sure every child gets the best education possible. To do this, they need to be in school, learning and growing every day.

This policy shows our commitment to:

- Setting high standards for attendance and punctuality
- Highlighting the benefits of regular attendance
- Reducing absences, especially frequent or long-term ones
- Making sure every pupil gets full-time education
- Acting early when attendance patterns become a concern
- Working closely with families to support attendance
- Sharing good ideas and working with other schools and agencies to improve attendance

2. Legal framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Education Act 1996

Education Act 2002

Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/contents>The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014

DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2025'

DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'

DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'

DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Academy Committee and the Headteacher are responsible for making sure this policy works effectively and follows the relevant statutory framework. Priorslee Academy also has key responsibilities, including:

- Set high standards for everyone—leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Create and update the Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
- Make sure the policy is fair and doesn't discriminate against anyone based on race, culture, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

School Leaders Must

- Keep accurate attendance records and share them with the government and local council.
- Work with local services to help pupils attend school and share updates about specific pupils when needed.
- Promote the importance of attendance in school policies and culture.
- Have high expectations for all pupils, but also adjust support based on individual needs.
- Review attendance data regularly and focus on pupils or groups who need the most help.
- Set attendance goals and support school leaders to meet them.
- Give advice to staff about attendance when needed.

- Train staff properly so they understand:
 - Why good attendance matters.
 - That poor attendance often signals deeper issues.
 - The legal rules about keeping attendance registers.

Tracking and Improving Attendance

- The Academy must have clear strategies to:
 - Track and follow up on absences.
 - Work with outside partners.
 - Keep partners informed about specific pupils when appropriate.
- Staff with attendance duties must have specialist training, including how to use and interpret attendance data.

The **Local Academy Committee** has overall responsibility for:

- Checking that the policy is being followed throughout the school.
- Promoting good attendance as part of the school's values and policies.
- Reviewing attendance data regularly and challenging school leaders to improve attendance for pupils or groups who need extra support. These discussions must be recorded in the Committee's meeting notes.
- Handling complaints about this policy, following the Academy's official complaints procedure.
- Making sure children are kept safe, by following the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education when planning how to protect and support pupils.

What the Headteacher Is Responsible For

- Running this policy day-to-day, and setting up systems that suit the school's needs.
- Choosing a senior leader to take on the role of Senior Attendance Champion.
- Making sure parents know the school expects good attendance—using things like the website, social media, and newsletters.
- Making sure every pupil gets their full education, and acting quickly when attendance issues start to show.
- Working with the Attendance Champion to create a tailored attendance strategy for the school, and checking how well it works.
- Creating a positive school culture where staff understand how behaviour, attendance, and inclusion are connected.
- Organising staff so that pastoral teams and attendance officers can support and monitor attendance effectively.
- Reviewing attendance reports from the senior leader in charge of attendance, using the data to plan improvements, and reporting progress to the Trust and the Local Academy Committee.
- Making sure staff get the right training on attendance, based on their role.

- Deciding whether to approve term-time absence requests, together with the senior leader responsible for attendance, using the school's official form.

The **designated Senior Leader (Senior Attendance Champion)** supported by the **attendance officer** is responsible for:

- Setting a clear goal to improve and maintain good attendance.
- Leading campaigns to raise awareness about attendance, including reward systems that pupils value and help shape.
- Reviewing and improving attendance expectations and processes.
- Studying attendance data to spot issues, plan improvements, and prepare reports for the Headteacher.
- Making sure attendance is recorded correctly and quickly in the MIS system. If a pupil's absence is unexplained, the accurate reason must be added within 5 working days.
- Creating and maintaining systems to deal with absences—and make sure all staff follow them.
- Working with pupils, families, and outside agencies when needed.
- Building strong relationships with parents, especially those whose children have poor attendance, to challenge absences and encourage a quick return to school.
- Leading meetings to review attendance and create improvement plans with the pupil, parent/carer, and other agencies if needed.
- Providing targeted support to pupils and families to help improve attendance.
- Writing case studies to show how their support has helped.
- Following government rules about children missing education—reporting regularly absent pupils to the local authority, especially before removing a child from the school register.
- Visiting homes or refer cases to the local authority's education welfare service when appropriate.
- Gathering all documents needed by the local authority if legal action is being considered.
- Informing the local authority when a pupil is removed from the school's admission or attendance register.
- Creating support plans for pupils returning after a long absence, helping them rebuild confidence and catch up.

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Checking the registers every day to make sure all pupils are marked present or absent—and follow up quickly on any missing marks to make sure pupils are safe.
- Calling parent carers when a pupil is absent and the reason hasn't been given, following the school's agreed timing.
- Answering calls from parent carers about pupil absences each day.

- Making sure the 'N' code (used when the reason for absence isn't known) is updated within 72 hours, if possible.
- Being the first point of contact for parents/carers and staff about pupil absences and appointments.
- Passing on calls to the Headteacher, Senior Attendance Lead, Attendance Officer, or Home-School Link Worker when more detailed support is needed.
- Checking that the right absence codes are used in the register.
- Collecting and sharing attendance data daily, weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly with the Attendance Officer and Headteacher.
- Keeping a record of all requests for term-time leave and any requests for penalty notices.

ALL Staff are responsible for:

- Creating a positive school environment where pupils feel supported.
- Applying this attendance policy fairly and consistently to everyone.
- Encouraging and reinforce good attendance and punctuality in everyday interactions.
- Using their knowledge of pupils to help decide if any welfare concerns should be reported.
- Completing registers accurately and on time every morning and afternoon.
- Talking to parent carers early if there are concerns about attendance, and work together to solve any issues.
- Identifying patterns of absence and raising concerns with the right person (like the Attendance Champion and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead).

ALL Pupils Must:

- Arrive at school on time every day, unless they're ill or have serious family or personal reasons.
- Come prepared and ready to learn, with a positive attitude.
- Talk to a staff member if something is making it hard to attend school, be on time, or focus on learning.

4. Parent Carers' Legal Duty

- Parent carers must ensure their child receives a full-time education that suits their age, ability, and any special needs.
- If their child is registered at a school, they must attend every day the school is open, unless there is a valid reason (e.g. illness or approved absence).

Parent carers should:

- Give the school accurate and up-to-date contact details, including at least two emergency contacts.

- Update the school if any contact details change.
- Make sure their child attends school every day, unless there is a legal reason not to.
- Ensure their child arrives on time and ready to learn.
- Call the school by 8:00am on the first day of absence and say when the child is expected to return.
- Talk to the school about any issues that might affect attendance or punctuality.
- Take part in support offered by the school to help improve attendance, before more formal action is needed.
- Submit written requests for exceptional leave during term time before making any plans.
- Provide medical evidence if the school asks for it to explain an absence.
- Book appointments outside school hours whenever possible.
- Stick to any attendance agreements made with the school or local authority.

5. Working with Parent Carers to Improve Attendance

Priorslee Academy works closely with parent carers to build good habits around attendance and punctuality from an early age. Because missing school can seriously affect a child's progress and achievement, the Academy offers strong support to families—but will take firm action if attendance becomes a concern.

How the Academy Supports Families

- Builds trusting, respectful relationships with parents and carers.
- Keeps open and honest communication with families about school expectations, attendance, and performance.
- Works with other agencies (e.g. Family Hubs and social services) to support pupils and families when needed.
- Makes sure parents understand their legal duty to send their child to school every day it's open—unless there's a valid reason, such as illness or approved absence.

Keeping Parent Carers Informed

- Regularly shares updates with parents about their child's attendance, absence, and punctuality.
- Explains how regular attendance helps children learn, grow socially, and develop confidence.

When Attendance Becomes a Concern

- The attendance officer will work with parents to understand and remove any barriers to regular attendance.
- The Academy will always be sensitive to the reasons behind absences and will offer support first, rather than punishment.

- If the issue is within school (e.g. bullying), staff including the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, and/or the SENCO will help resolve it.
- If the issue is outside school, due to family issues etc., the Academy will work with outside agencies and encourage parent carers to seek support.

6. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

6.1 Absence:

Arrival at the Academy after the register has closed

Not attending the Academy for any reason

6.2 Authorised Absence:

The Headteacher will authorise pupils to be absent from the Academy site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The Headteacher **will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#)**

Circumstances include, but are not limited to:

A pupil is prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including suspension or exclusion. Please note that the Academy reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of an illness as stated by the parent carers

A pupil has been granted leave of absence by the Headteacher of the Academy

Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day, which the Academy has approved and evidence of the appointment has been provided.

The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong and the Academy has granted leave

Parent carers travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers: Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the Academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad

Attending an interview

Study leave

A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

Reference should also be made to [Section 8 Leave of Absence](#) below.

6.3 Unauthorised absence:

Circumstances include, but, are not limited to:

- Parent Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or without good reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have not been approved following a parents/carers request
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at the Academy after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children (including siblings) or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- No school uniform
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Academy will never authorise the unilateral withdrawal of pupils by their parents as a result of a parental concern or complaint. Such absences can be damaging to children's education, are unnecessary, do not allow staff to deal with the issue efficiently, and, as a consequence, will be unauthorised.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher, not the parent/carer, to decide whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Such decisions will be made in accordance with government regulations and guidance. The Academy can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to the Academy it is suspected that they have been on holiday.

Priorslee Academy will not authorise the withdrawal of a child from school by a parent carer because they have a concern or complaint. These types of absences:

- Harm the child's education
- Are unnecessary

- Make it harder for staff to resolve issues and, as a consequence, will be marked as unauthorised
-
- It is the Headteacher's job—not the parent carer's—to decide whether an absence is authorised or not. This decision follows government rules and guidance.
- The school can change an absence from authorised to unauthorised (or vice versa) if new information comes to light. For example: If a parent says their child is sick, but it turns out they were actually on holiday, the absence will be changed to unauthorised. Parent Carers will be informed of any changes.

6.4 Persistent absence (PA):

Missing **10** percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason

6.5 Severe Absence (SA):

Missing **50** percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason

6.6 Missing Education:

Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school

7. Attendance Expectations

Parent Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full time education. Legal action may be instigated against parent carers whose child's attendance is irregular or/and at an unacceptably low level, and where parent carers are failing to fulfil their legal responsibility.

Priorslee Academy has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend the Academy punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The Academy day starts at **8:50am**, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site by this time.

Those pupils who arrive after the starting time, but before the end of the registration period will be marked as late.

AM registers will be taken at 8.50am and

PM registers will be taken at different times, according to year group:

EYFS: 12:20pm

KS1: 12:30pm

LKS2: 12:50pm

UKS2: 1:15pm respectively.

Pupils arriving after these times will be marked as late.

If a pupil arrives after the registers close but before the session ends, they will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for that session.

Being late means missing important learning, disrupting routines, and affecting relationships—so it is vital to arrive on time.

What Happens When Pupils Are Late

- Pupils who arrive late must sign in at the school office and give a reason for being late.
- The school monitors lateness closely. If a pupil is often late, the attendance officer will meet with parents to help solve any issues and improve punctuality.
- If lateness continues and is unauthorised, the Local Authority may take legal action.

8. Absence Procedures

On the first day of absence, parent carers should telephone or email the Academy office before 8.00am to inform staff of the reason for the pupil's absence and the likely length of the absence.

If your child is absent, you must contact the school every day until they return.

If you already know how long your child will be off (for example, recovering from an operation), you can let the school know the expected length of absence and the reason.

In these cases, the school will agree on a 'check-in' date to review the situation and see if your child is ready to return.

Where no information has been received by **9:25am** on the first day of absence, the Academy will text and email the parent carers of the absent pupil to ask where they are.

If, by 10.00am, there is no response from the parent carers, the Academy will make a phone call to ask the whereabouts of the absent pupil.

The Academy will always follow up when a pupil is absent to:

- Find out the reason for the absence.

- Make sure the pupil is safe and any necessary safeguarding steps are taken.
- Decide if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Use the correct attendance code in the register.

Home Visits

If the reason for absence isn't clear, the **attendance officer or another staff member may visit the pupil's home** to find out more.

Home visits may also happen if:

- The school receives **conflicting information** about the absence.
- Staff are **worried about the pupil's wellbeing or safety**.

The Academy will not normally request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the Academy reserves the right to request supporting evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence, where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or in circumstances where an absence due to illness is longer than 5 days. If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.

When a pupil with a social worker is absent without good reason, the social worker should be informed of unauthorised absences and support improved attendance. Where Academy are considering the use of legal interventions, the view of the relevant social worker should be considered although the final decision will be taken by the Academy in liaison with the local authority.

The Academy usually won't ask for medical evidence when a pupil is off sick. However, if there's reasonable doubt about the illness or the absence lasts more than 5 days, the Academy may ask for proof—like a doctor's note, prescription, or appointment card.

If the school isn't convinced the illness is genuine, the absence will be marked as unauthorised, and parents will be informed.

If a pupil who has a social worker is absent without a good reason, the school will inform the social worker and work with them to improve attendance. If the school is considering legal action due to poor attendance, the social worker's view will be taken into account—but the final decision will be made by the Academy, in consultation with the local authority.

9. Attendance Register

- By law, every school must keep an admission register.

- Priorslee Academy uses Bromcom to record attendance. This helps keep records accurate and easy to analyse or share with the Trust and other authorities.

What the Register Records

Each pupil will be marked as:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved off-site activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The morning register will be marked by **8.55am**. Pupils will receive a late mark (Code L) if they are not in their classroom by this time.

The morning register will close at **9.25am**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence (Code U) if they do not attend the Academy before this time.

- The afternoon register will be marked by at different times, according to year group:

EYFS: 12:20pm

KS1: 12:30pm

LKS2: 12:50pm

UKS2: 1:15pm respectively

Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

The afternoon register will close at

EYFS: 12:25pm

KS1: 12:35pm

LKS2: 12:55pm

UKS2: 1:20pm respectively

Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not in their classroom for registration before this time.

The Academy will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. See [Appendix 2](#). The cause of each absence is always required.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for six years from the date the data was entered.

10. Leave of Absence

- Headteachers cannot approve term-time absences unless parents apply in advance and the Headteacher agrees there are exceptional circumstances.
- Family holidays and weddings are not normally considered exceptional—so these requests are likely to be refused.
- Parent Carers must:
 - Submit a written request using the school's official form (Appendix 3).
 - Apply at least four weeks before the planned absence.
 - Explain the reason and give the exact dates of the proposed leave.
 - The form is available on the school website and on the noticeboard next to the Academy office.

Decision Process

- The Headteacher decides whether the request meets the criteria for exceptional circumstances.
- Each case is considered individually, based on the pupil's situation and the impact on their education.
- The Headteacher's decision is final and cannot be appealed.
- If approved, the Headteacher will:
 - Set the length of the authorised absence.
 - Confirm the return date.
 - Any late return may be marked as unauthorised.

Unauthorised Absence and Penalties

- If parents take their child out of school without approval, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- The school will follow the Local Authority's Code of Conduct (Appendix 4) and may report the absence to the Local Authority.
- This could lead to a fixed penalty notice (a fine).
- If the school suspects a child was taken on holiday without permission (e.g. illness was claimed but not genuine), parents will be asked to provide evidence.
 - If no evidence is provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and reported.

No Retrospective Approval

- The Academy cannot approve leave after it has already happened.
- Any absence not approved in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

10.1 Illness and healthcare appointments

- Parent Carers should book medical or dental appointments outside school hours whenever possible.
- If this is not possible, parents must:
 - Seek approval in advance for their child's absence.
 - Provide proof of the appointment, such as a medical card or appointment letter.
- Time off for appointments should be kept to a minimum—children should not miss a full day or half-day unless absolutely necessary.

10.2 Performances and activities, including paid work

- If a pupil is taking part in a performance or activity (paid or unpaid) that means they will miss school, they must get a licence from the Local Authority (LA). This licence allows the school to authorise the absence.
- The Academy will make special arrangements to help pupils keep up with their learning—this might include remote teaching. These plans must be approved by the LA to make sure they are suitable.
- If the licence includes specific dates, the absence is automatically authorised—no extra approval is needed from the Headteacher.
- If the licence does not include dates, the Headteacher will decide whether to authorise each day of absence.
- If no licence is obtained, the Headteacher will not authorise any absence for the performance or activity.

10.3 Religious observance

Parent Carers must request time off for religious observance at least four weeks in advance.

The Academy will only approve absences for days that are specifically set aside for religious observance by a recognised religious body.

This means it must be a day when members of that religion are expected to stay off work to mark the occasion.

If there is any uncertainty, the Academy may ask the religious body for advice before making a decision.

10.4 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

If a pupil's parent carer is part of a community covered by this rule and is travelling for work, they must:

Request leave of absence at least four weeks in advance.

The Academy will only approve absences for occupational travel—not for other reasons.

11. Monitoring and Analysing Absence

The Senior Attendance Champion, supported by the Attendance Officer, will regularly track and analyse attendance data to spot issues early and take action quickly.

Data Collected Weekly Includes:

- Punctuality, truancy, authorised and unauthorised absences for:
 - The whole school
 - Year groups
 - Individual pupils
 - Demographic groups (e.g. ethnicity, economic background)
 - SEND pupils
 - Looked After Children (LAC)
 - Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
 - Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence (PA)
 - Pupils at risk of Severe Absence (SA)

What the Analysis Looks For:

- Patterns in attendance codes (e.g. frequent use of 'U' for unauthorised absence)
- Days with poor attendance
- Historic trends in absence and punctuality
- Barriers to attendance, such as:
 - Truancy
 - Frequent lateness
 - Unauthorised absences

Example Insights from a Sample Week:

- The Academy had 4 authorised and 4 unauthorised absences.
- Year 1 had the highest unauthorised absences.
- Pupils with SEND had more unauthorised absences than those without.
- Lateness was more common among pupils at risk of PA or SA.

This kind of analysis helps the Academy target support where it's needed most and respond quickly to emerging attendance issues.

- Staff across the Academy will receive regular updates (written or verbal) to help them track pupil attendance and apply attendance procedures effectively.

- The Senior Attendance Champion, supported by the Attendance Officer, will:
 - Monitor how attendance changes over time.
 - Evaluate the impact of interventions aimed at improving attendance.
- The Local Academy Committee will:
 - Review attendance data regularly, including both recent and long-term trends.
 - Support the Headteacher in setting attendance goals and identifying priority areas for improvement.
- The Academy will share specific pupil attendance data with the Department for Education (DfE) when requested.
- The Academy, with support from the Trust, will:
 - Compare its attendance data with national averages.
 - Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
 - Share successful strategies with other academies in the Trust.

12. Persistent Absence

What Is Persistent Absence (PA)?

According to the Department for Education, a pupil is classed as a persistent absentee if their attendance falls to 90% or below—meaning they miss 10% or more of school sessions.

Pupils Who May Be More Vulnerable to PA

Some pupils are more at risk of high absence, including:

- Children in need or on a Child Protection Plan
- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Young carers
- Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
- Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Pupils from traveller communities
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Pupils who have experienced bullying or discrimination

How the Academy Supports Pupils at Risk of PA

The Academy will work proactively with pupils and families to improve attendance using methods such as:

- Meetings with pupils and parent carers to understand barriers and offer support
- Explaining available help
- Reviewing current support plans or actions

- Creating attendance improvement plans
- Regular check-ins to monitor progress
- Frequent contact with families to discuss attendance
- Assessing the need for an EHC plan or Individual Health Plan (IHP)
- Planning re-engagement support, especially for vulnerable pupils
- Connecting families with wider support services, including the local authority
- Explaining consequences and possible sanctions for continued absence
- Applying sanctions if necessary

Safeguarding and Severe Absence

- If a pupil at risk of PA is also at risk of harm, the Academy will work with relevant agencies (e.g. social services) to provide support.
- If severe absence continues despite support, it may be considered a form of neglect.
- The Academy will escalate concerns in line with its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

13. Severe Absence

What Is Severe Absence?

- A pupil is considered a severe absentee if their attendance is 50% or lower—meaning they miss half or more of their school sessions.
- Pupils at this level of absence are at serious risk of harm and need intensive support.

How the Academy Responds to Severe Absence

- The Academy will treat these pupils as a top priority for support.
- Support may include:
 - Special attendance plans
 - Whole-family support plans
 - Considering an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - Exploring alternative education options if needed
- The Academy will work with local authorities and other partners to remove barriers to attendance.

When Severe Absence Becomes a Safeguarding Concern

- If a pupil continues to be severely absent without a valid reason, even after all support has been offered, it may be considered neglect.
- In such cases, the Academy will:
 - Treat the situation as a safeguarding issue
 - Escalate concerns following the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

14. Vulnerable Pupils

Supporting Pupils with SEND, Health Conditions, and Mental Health Needs

Understanding Individual Barriers

- The Academy recognises that every case is different, and some pupils face genuine barriers to attending school.
- Staff will work with families to remove in-school barriers and, if needed, involve external agencies for further support.
- This includes using Early Help and Earliest Help services as part of the Academy's safeguarding approach.

Supporting Pupils with SEND and Health Conditions

- Pupils with SEND or health issues (including mental health) may need extra support to attend regularly.
- The Academy will follow its SEND Policy and the SBMAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy to:
 - Make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
 - Follow any EHC Plans or Individual Health Plans (IHPs).
 - Work with external partners to strengthen support.

Mental Health and Safeguarding

- If a pupil's absence may be linked to mental health, the Academy will:
 - Contact parent carers to discuss possible causes.
 - If staff believe the issue is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Long-Term Health-Related Absence

If a pupil is away from school for more than 15 school days in a year due to health, the Academy will inform the Local Authority (LA) and:

- Share details about the pupil's needs, abilities, and learning programme.
- Help the pupil reintegrate when they return.
- Keep the pupil informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage them to stay connected with peers.

Tailored Support Strategies

To help pupils with SEND or health issues manage stress and anxiety around school, the Academy may:

- Hold regular meetings to review adjustments.
- Create a pastoral support plan.
- Use tools like a strengths and difficulties questionnaire.

- Involve internal or external specialists.
- Provide a quiet space for breaks and lunch.
- Allow pupils to request time out from class.
- Offer temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Use phased returns after long absences.
- Provide small group support, if necessary.
- Deliver tailored support based on individual needs.

Returning After Hospital Education or Home Tuition

When a pupil returns after receiving education outside school:

- The Academy will work with parents and external agencies to ensure a smooth reintegration.
- A staff member will be assigned to oversee the return.
- Peers will be involved to help welcome and support the pupil.

15. Celebrating Good Attendance

Recognising Positive Attendance

The Academy values and celebrates:

- Excellent attendance and punctuality
- Improvement over time, even if attendance started off low
- Effort and progress, not just perfect records

Pupils who miss school due to illness, medical conditions, or exceptional circumstances will not be penalised. The Academy will make sure these pupils are not excluded from attendance rewards.

To ensure fairness, the Academy will:

- Develop individualised attendance targets for pupils with health needs or challenging home circumstances.
- Use flexible and supportive approaches to celebrate effort and progress.

16. Attendance Intervention

Regular Reviews

- The Senior Attendance Champion, supported by the Attendance Officer, will regularly review pupils whose attendance or punctuality is below the Academy's expected level.
- The Academy uses a tiered system to respond to low or falling attendance—but may intervene earlier if there are serious concerns.

Using Data to Guide Support

- Attendance data will be used to:
 - Spot patterns of absence
 - Develop specific strategies to improve attendance
- These strategies will be tailored to individual pupils, based on their needs and circumstances.

Tracking Impact

- The effectiveness of interventions will be recorded in case studies, as directed by the Headteacher.
- The Academy will produce at least two case studies per academic year to show how support has helped improve attendance.

17. Legal Intervention

Legal Duty of Parent Carers

- If a child of compulsory school age does not attend school regularly, their parent carers may be committing a criminal offence.
- In such cases, the Local Authority can take legal action, which may include prosecution.

Academy's Response to Persistent Unauthorised Absence

- If a pupil continues to miss school without a valid reason, even after support has been offered, the Academy may use a range of sanctions to address the issue.
- These actions will be:
 - Based on the individual circumstances of each case.
 - Taken only after all support options have been exhausted.

17.1 Attendance Contracts

An Attendance Contract is a formal written agreement between a parent carer and either the Academy or the local authority, designed to address irregular school attendance. This intervention outlines clear actions and responsibilities for all parties involved, holding each accountable for their role. The contract aims to provide support and serve as an alternative to legal prosecution.

If the agreed actions from the Parenting Contract Meeting are not followed and unauthorised absences continue, legal action may be taken against the parent or carer.

While there is no requirement for the Academy or local authority to offer an Attendance Contract—and it may not be suitable in every case—it should always

be considered before proceeding to an Education Supervision Order or prosecution.

17.2 Notices to Improve

If a pupil's attendance meets the national threshold and support is deemed appropriate, but parents fail to engage with the support offered, the Academy may issue a Notice to Improve. This serves as a final opportunity for parents to engage before further legal action is considered.

Notices to Improve are issued in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Code of Conduct for the local authority area where the pupil attends school.

Each notice will include:

- A summary of the pupil's attendance record and the related offences.
- An explanation of the benefits of regular school attendance and the legal duty of parents under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support that has already been offered.
- Information about further support available, or how to re-access previously offered support that was not taken up.
- A clear warning that a Penalty Notice may be issued if attendance does not improve during the specified period. This will include a definition of what constitutes "sufficient improvement," determined on a case-by-case basis.
- A defined improvement period, typically between 3 and 6 weeks.
- The grounds on which the notice is being issued.
- a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

17.3 Penalty notices

The Headteacher—or someone authorised by them—may, in consultation with the Local Authority, issue a Penalty Notice to parents when a child of compulsory school age has unauthorised absences from the Academy.

Before issuing a Penalty Notice, the Academy will carefully consider the individual circumstances, including:

- Whether the national threshold has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence - usually equivalent to 5 school days - within a rolling 10-week school period) with one of, or a combination of the following codes:
 - (a) code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
 - (b) code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
 - (c) code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and

(d) code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

- Whether a Penalty Notice is the most effective way to improve the pupil's attendance.
- Whether alternative interventions, such as further support, a Notice to Improve, or other legal measures, would be more appropriate.
- Whether any duties under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a Penalty Notice unsuitable.

If in an individual case, the local authority believes a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, when parent carers are deliberately or purposefully avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for events such as birthdays and taking their child out of school, or when there are only four pupil days in school and the fifth day is for example a PD day or bank holiday.

Each parent carer who is legally responsible for the pupil's absence may receive a Penalty Notice. However, it is typically issued only to the parent carers who permitted the absence.

- All payments must be made directly to the Local Authority, regardless of who issued the notice.
- If payment is not received within 28 days, the Local Authority may choose to either prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Penalty Amounts:

- For a first Penalty Notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.
- If a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same pupil, the fine is £160, payable within 28 days.

A third Penalty Notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the date the first Penalty Notice was issued. If the national threshold for unauthorised absence is met again during this three-year period, alternative legal action will be considered instead. This may include agreeing a supportive action, a parenting contract or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Additionally, a Penalty Notice may be issued if a parent allows their child to be in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a suspension or exclusion. This applies only when the Academy has formally notified the parent that the child must not be in a public place on those days.

These types of Penalty Notices:

- Are not part of the National Framework.

- Are not subject to the same support-related considerations.
- Do not count toward the limit used in the escalation process.

Parent Carers must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120 within 28 days.

17.4 Education Supervision Order (ESO)

When other interventions have not successfully improved a pupil's attendance, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) may be considered as a formal legal alternative to criminal prosecution. ESOs are issued through the Family Court or High Court and give the Local Authority (LA) a legal role in supporting both the pupil and their parent carers to improve attendance.

Before proceeding with an ESO, the Local Authority will:

- Issue a notice of intention to the parent carers, informing them that an ESO is being considered.
- Arrange a meeting with the parent carers and the pupil to discuss the situation.
- Decide whether to proceed with applying for an ESO based on the outcome of that meeting.

Once an Education Supervision Order (ESO) is granted, a supervisor from the Local Authority will determine the actions or requirements that must be followed. These may include:

- Requiring parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring parents to participate in a parenting programme.
- Requiring parents to access relevant support services.
- Requiring the pupil to undergo an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Holding review meetings every three months involving all parties.

If parents persistently fail to comply with the directions given under the ESO, they may be committing an offence. In such cases, the Local Authority may prosecute the parents in the Magistrates' Court. Upon conviction, parents may be subject to a fine of up to £1,000.

17.5 Attendance Prosecution

If a child fails to attend the school at which they are registered on a regular basis, the parent carer may be guilty of an offence and subject to prosecution by the Local Authority.

Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court is considered a last resort, used only when all other voluntary support, formal interventions, or legal measures have either failed or been deemed inappropriate based on the specific circumstances of the case.

Only Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents for school attendance offences, and they are responsible for covering all associated costs, including the preparation of court documentation.

If convicted, parents may face:

- A fine of up to £2,500
- A community order
- Or imprisonment for up to 3 months

17.6 Parenting Order

Following a conviction for a child's non-attendance at school, the Court may issue a Parenting Order alongside a fine and/or a community order. This order requires the parent carer to comply with specific arrangements set out by the Court, which are designed to support improved school attendance.

These arrangements may include:

- Attending counselling or guidance sessions.
- Participating in parenting education or support classes.
- Receiving help and support aimed at improving the child's attendance.

The Parenting Order can remain in effect for up to 3 months. Failure to comply with the terms of the order may result in further legal consequences, including a fine of up to £1,000.

17.7 Training of Staff

The Academy will ensure that all teachers and support staff receive training on this attendance policy as part of their induction programme. Following initial training, staff will continue to receive regular and ongoing professional development to support their understanding and implementation of attendance procedures.

Training will cover, at a minimum, the following areas:

- The importance of good attendance for pupil outcomes.
- Understanding that absence is often linked to wider personal or family circumstances.
- The legal responsibilities of schools and academies, including the accurate keeping of attendance registers.
- The Academy's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance.
- The Academy's approach to multi-agency working, including how to provide intensive support for pupils with persistent absence.

Staff will also be trained to recognise that increased absence may indicate a safeguarding concern, and will be equipped with the knowledge of how to respond appropriately in line with safeguarding procedures.

18. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix 1

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

SECTION 5 – ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Academy day starts at:	8.50am	Pupils expected on site by:	8.50am
AM register taken at:	8.55am	PM register taken at:	EYFS: 12:20pm KS1: 12:30pm LKS2: 12:50pm UKS2: 1:15pm respectively

SECTION 6 – ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Where no information has been received by	10.00am	on the first day of
absence, the Academy will telephone the home of the absent pupil to enquire regarding the absence.		
Academy procedure:		
<i>Where no information has been received by 9:25am on the first day of absence, the Academy will text and email the parent carers of the absent pupil to ask where they are.</i>		
<i>If, by 10.00am, there is no response from the parent carers, the Academy will make a phone call to ask the whereabouts of the absent pupil.</i>		
<i>The Academy will always follow up when a pupil is absent to:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find out the reason for the absence.• Make sure the pupil is safe and any necessary safeguarding steps are taken.• Decide if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.• Use the correct attendance code in the register.		
<i>If the reason for absence isn't clear, the attendance officer or another staff member may visit the pupil's home to find out more.</i>		
<i>Home visits may also happen if the school receives conflicting information about the absence or if staff are worried about the pupil's wellbeing or safety.</i>		

SECTION 7 – ATTENDANCE REGISTER

AM register taken at:	8.55am	AM register will close at:	9.25am
PM register taken at:	EYFS: 12:20pm KS1: 12:30pm LKS2: 12:50pm UKS2: 1:15pm respectively	PM register will close at:	EYFS: 12:25pm KS1: 12:35pm LKS2: 12:55pm UKS2: 1:20pm respectively

SECTION 10 – PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Academy procedure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with pupils and parents to listen, and understand barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having• Explain the help that is available• Review any existing actions or interventions• Establishing attendance improvement plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.

- Leading regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

SECTION 13 – CELEBRATING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Academy procedure:

The Academy will acknowledge excellent attendance and punctuality / improvement in attendance / punctuality in the following ways:

Weekly certificates to classes in celebration assemblies; weekly celebrations in Head teacher’s letter; half-termly class celebrations for best attendance.

The Academy will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

SECTION 14 – ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION

Academy’s expected attendance level:	97.5%
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Academy’s staged approach / interventions to effectively manage pupil absence and punctuality as well as responses to improved attendance / punctuality.

Pre-stage	Academy’s supportive measures and ways of working with parents prior to stages outlined below:
Attendance Stage 1	Phone calls to check in with parent carers
Attendance Stage 2	SAL 1 Letter with offer of an attendance support meeting
Attendance Stage 3	SAL 2 Letter
Lates Stage 1	Phone call to parent carers and attendance support meeting offered
Lates Stage 2	SAL Late letter

Appendix 2 – Attendance Codes used in our Academy

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within

		walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: In police detention Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 3 - Leave of Absence Request Form

Request for Leave during Term Time

Date.....

To: The Headteacher of Priorslee Academy

I request permission for leave in term time from school for my child:

(full name)

.....

from (date) to (date) for school days.

My child will be accompanied during the leave by:

(parent carer) and (parent carer).....

The exceptional circumstances and reason for this request are: -

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s) School(s)

.....

.....

Name of 1st Parent Carer(s) Signed

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Name of 2nd Parent Carer(s) Signed

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

(If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet and attach it to this form)

Please return the completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether your request is authorised or not. Please do not confirm any holiday booking until you have confirmation of permission for the leave in term time from the Headteacher.

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

PENALTY NOTICES (Education)

Including Amendments to:

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations - 2024

National Framework for Penalty Notices: Feb 2024

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Working Together to Improve School Attendance: DfE Aug 2024

LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT

April 2024

Reviewed September 2025

1. The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that Penalty Notices for school absence are issued in a manner that is fair and consistent across the Borough of Telford & Wrekin. The code sets out the arrangements for administering Penalty Notices in Telford & Wrekin and must be adhered to by anyone issuing a Penalty Notice for school absence in this area. The code complies with relevant regulations and the Department for Education's national framework for Penalty Notices as set out in the ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) DfE guidance- February 2024.

2. This code has been drawn up to consult with the headteachers and governing bodies of state-funded schools and the local police force proposing that arrangements for issuing school attendance related Penalty Notices remains the responsibility of the Local Authority (LA), delegated to the Attendance Support Team.

Legal basis

3. Penalty Notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, alternative provision settings, and certain off-site places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).

4. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how Penalty Notices for school absence must be used.

5. A Penalty Notice can only be issued by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable.

6. The national framework for Penalty Notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of Penalty Notice schemes for school absence in England.

7. A parent includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will usually be issued to the parent or parents with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil's attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Rationale

8. Research published by the Department for Education in May 2022 found pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

a. Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

b. Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

9. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and often the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

10. Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

11. The national framework for Penalty Notices is based on the principles that Penalty Notices should only be used in cases where:

- a. support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- b. they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular family.

When may a Penalty Notice for absence be appropriate?

12. When the national threshold has been met: when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a Penalty Notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks¹, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- (a) code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
- (b) code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
- (c) code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
- (d) code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

13. During or following a truancy sweep: the LA would only issue a Penalty Notice if they locate a child during a truancy sweep who is within a five day exclusion from school (see criteria for Exclusion Penalty Notice (see 36.a-c))

14. If in an individual case the local authority believes a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, when parent(s) are deliberately or purposefully avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for events such as birthdays and taking their child out of school, or when there are only four pupil days in school and the fifth day is for example a PD day or bank holiday.

15. If repeated Penalty Notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. The national framework for Penalty Notices sets out that a maximum of 2 Penalty Notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. This may include agreeing a supportive action, a parenting contract or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

16. For the purpose of the escalation process, previous Penalty Notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

Key considerations prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice for school absence

¹ A school week means any week (Monday to Sunday) in which there is at least one school session. The 10 school-week period when the national threshold applies may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

17. The following considerations will be made before issuing (or requesting that another authorised officer issues) a Penalty Notice to ensure consistency of approach:

a. In cases where support is not appropriate (for example, for holidays in term time), consider on a case by case basis:

- Is a Penalty Notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a Penalty Notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a Penalty Notice in this case given the local authority would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

b. In cases where support is appropriate, consider on a case-by-case basis:

- Has sufficient support already been provided? Sufficient support will usually include: Offers of appropriate early help by the school and declined by the parents, an Early Help Assessment to access support from the LA Strengthening Families Team and lack of engagement by parents. Non-cooperation with a Parenting contract or declined any other appropriate support, including referrals to other external agencies.
- Is a Penalty Notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a Penalty Notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a Penalty Notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a Penalty Notice (or a Notice to improve in cases where support is appropriate) will usually be issued.

Notice to improve

18. A Notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a Notice to improve would have any impact on a parent's behaviour (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

- In Telford & Wrekin the issuing of A 'Notice to Improve' related to school attendance is delegated to the Attendance Support Team.
- Schools will refer all cases when the threshold is met for a Penalty Notice and a Notice to improve will only be issued if both school and the LA are in agreement it is the appropriate action.
- The Notice to Improve will inform the parent that the pupils attendance will be monitored and reviewed between three and six weeks. This may be extended after six weeks.

- There should be no further sessions of unauthorised absence or signs of improvement during the monitoring period.
- The school will be asked to provide details of the pupil's attendance at any time during the monitoring period. If the attendance does not begin to improve immediately the school do not need to wait until the end of the monitoring period to re-refer the case to the Attendance Support Team.
- If the school and the Attendance Support Team are in agreement, a Penalty Notice will be issued. To ensure consistent application of Penalty Notices, the Attendance Support Team will issue all 'Notice to Improve' warnings.

19. **The 'Notice to Improve'** will include:

- a) The pupil's attendance record and details of the offence(s)
- b) The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- c) Support/opportunities for support provided so far
- d) Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with if appropriate
- e) Risk of a Penalty Notice being issued or prosecution considered if improvement is not secured within the improvement period
- f) A clear time frame for the improvement of between three and six weeks
- g) Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like in the case 9e.g. no further offences within a certain timeframe or attendance improved within a cert\in timeframe).
- h) The grounds on which a Penalty Notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

How authorised officers will work together

20. Authorised officers should work together to ensure that Penalty Notices are used when likely to be effective and change behaviour.

21. An authorised officer can be a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. Telford & Wrekin are consulting on who will be responsible for the administration of and who will issue Penalty Notices in this area.

22. Where the school (or police) request that the LA issues the Penalty Notice, they need to:

23. **Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices:**

- a) Schools will refer all cases to the Attendance Support Team where there are unauthorised absences and they believe it is appropriate for a Penalty Notice to be issued in the circumstances.
- b) Only the Attendance Support Team will issue Penalty Notices relating to unauthorised absence from school on behalf of Telford & Wrekin Council if the referral warrants a Penalty Notice to be issued. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, retain school/home relationships, and allow cohesion with other enforcement sanctions.
- c) Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action

i.e. during a Truancy Sweep. This will ensure that all evidential requirements are in place and meet Health & Safety requirements for the Council employees.

d) The Attendance Support team will report back to the referring school the outcome of the Penalty Notice, e.g. if it has been paid, if it has been withdrawn etc.

e) The Attendance Support team will retain all information relating to any issued Penalty Notice to allow for the monitoring during the three-year escalation period.

24. Where schools, West Mercia Police and neighbouring LA's consider the issuing of a Penalty Notice appropriate, this request will be investigated and actioned by the Attendance Support Team provided that:

a) All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner.

b) The circumstances of the pupil's absence meet all the criteria of this Code of Conduct.

c) Reasonable expectation that their use would improve attendance.

d) The issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

25. The Attendance Support Team will respond to all requests within 10 school days of receipt of referral.

26. **Where all criteria are met The Attendance Support Team will:**

Issue a Penalty Notice: where all criteria is met as laid down in this Code of Conduct.
or

Issue a formal written 'Notice to Improve' warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued if the criteria is met.

27. At the end of the monitoring period (or at a date agreed within the three to six weeks period following the date of the Notice to Improve) a Penalty Notice will be issued and sent via first class post.

28. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued the pupil's attendance will continue to be monitored by the school in partnership with the Attendance Support Team.

29. The Penalty Notice will be £160 and must be paid within 28 days but it is reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

30. Only one additional Penalty Notice may be issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period but there will be no option for the second offence to be discharged at the reduced amount of £80.

31. No third Penalty Notice will be issued within a three-year rolling period. For any third or subsequent offence, alternative sanctions will be considered, such as prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act or an alternative legal intervention.

Cases where a pupil has moved school or local authority area within the three rolling year period

32. If a pupil has moved school within the LA in the previous 3 years, the process of referring to the Attendance Support Team will allow a check of whether a Penalty Notice (or Notices) has been issued in the previous 3 years without any additional checks being required.

33. In cases where the pupil has moved between LA areas in the previous 3 years, either because the family has moved house or the pupil has moved school, an additional check should be carried out. Where the previous LA is known, the authority for that area should be contacted to check whether a Penalty Notice has been issued to that parent for that pupil in the previous 3 years. These checks can be made by the school and/or local authority.

34. Telford & Wrekin have established a mailbox to allow queries from other LAs and vice versa. This mailbox is: **crossborder.PenaltyNotice@telford.gov.uk**.

35. In cases where the previous LA is not known or the information cannot be, or is not, provided by the previous LA, it should be assumed that the parent has not previously received a Penalty Notice and the escalation process started as per a new case.

Circumstances where an Exclusion Penalty Notice (EPN) may be issued:

36. For a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school and is excluded from that school, either for a fixed period, or permanently, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence under *Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006* if:

- a. the child in question is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every period of exclusion.
- b. the parent must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of their duty and the dates it relates to.
- c. If all criteria are met, a Penalty Notice will be issued and payment options are in line with 1st issue Penalty Notices. A 'Notice to Improve' will not be issued.

Use of sums received for payment of Penalty Notices:

37. All payments for Penalty Notices are paid to the issuing Local Authority.

38. Monies should be first used for administration of the Penalty Notice system and prosecution. If a surplus remains, from school year 2024-2025 this can be spent on attendance support. In practice, 'support' means any other activity to improve attendance, not including Penalty Notice or prosecution in line with 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance.

39. The revenue must not be considered part of wider local authority funding and should not therefore be elide upon to fund core expectations of the local authority.

40. Any surplus monies must be paid to the Secretary of State.

Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices:

41. Once issued, a Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- a. Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- b. The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Code of Conduct
- c. The parent can show that they did not receive the Notice e.g. it was delivered to the wrong address.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

42. Arrangements for payment will be detailed within the Penalty Notice.

43. Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

44. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £80 and payment after this time, but within 28 days, is £160.

45. All Penalty Notice payments are made to the issuing Local Authority. Telford & Wrekin Council retains any revenue from Penalty Notices.

Non-Payment of Penalty Notices:

46. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the pursuance of the prosecution process under the provision of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or unless it is withdrawn for one of the reasons previously stated.

Policy and Publicity

47. Issuing of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the Local Authority's Attendance Policy

48. All school Attendance Policies will include information on the issuing of Penalty Notices and this will be brought to the attention of all parents.

49. The LA will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions on the Councils website and in promotional/public information material.

Reporting & Review:

50. The Attendance Support Team will report annually to the DfE in the form of the PRMA data collection in the Autumn Term.

51. The regular reports to the Senior Management Team on attendance matters will include Penalty Notice use.

52. The Attendance Support Team will review Penalty Notice use at regular intervals and make any necessary legislative changes and will review the general enforcement strategy as appropriate.