



## SCHOOL

# POLICY

<b>Policy Name:</b>	Attendance Policy
<b>Review date:</b>	May 23
<b>Date to be reviewed:</b>	May 25
<b>Agreed by the BOG on:</b>	May 2023
<b>Policies which are linked to this policy:</b>	Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Child Protection

Integrated Education has been one of the most significant social developments within Northern Ireland in the last 40 years. Priory wears its Integrated ethos and practice with pride. Integration is prioritised by school leadership and is led by the Principal, BOGs and a drive team, under the leadership of the newly appointed Integration Co-ordinator. The four core principles of integrated education - **equality, faith and values, parental involvement** and **social responsibility** are central in all we do. Integration and Inclusion remains high on the agenda of the college and we will endeavour to make sure that every child is welcomed and taught in a safe and nurturing Priory College.

### College Mission Statement

Priory Integrated College welcomes children from all traditions, cultures and abilities. Together, we aim to empower every child to reach their full potential, in a nurturing, caring environment which upholds respect and excellence for all.

## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### Vision

Priory Integrated College will have a whole school attendance rate of 88.3% by June 2023

### Aim

To raise pupil attainment; by improving individual, class, year group and whole school attendance.

### Objectives

- Raise the profile and importance of attendance.
- Reinforce the relationship between good attendance and attainment.
- Set personalised attendance targets that are reviewed termly to improve individual attendance
- Devise a system of rewards to promote good attendance.
- Use technology to track attendance and inform all stakeholders of appropriate data to improve attendance.
- Provide annual staff training on the use of Sims to manage attendance.
- Consult all stakeholders annually in relation to the review of the attendance policy.
- Communicate the attendance policy to all stakeholders.

### Rationale

Attending school regularly is important for all young people because of the link between attendance and attainment. School attendance for post primary schools in Northern Ireland in 2021/22 was 89%. Parents have a statutory duty, as set out in Article 45 in the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 to ensure that their child attends school regularly. As a school we are committed to prioritising attendance in the school development plan and having appropriate resources to manage attendance.

The proactive nature of our strategy focuses on making Priory Integrated College a place that young people want to come to for their learning. We focus on recognising and rewarding good attendance and ensuring that young people are aware of their own attendance by setting and reviewing attendance targets. Intervention groups allow early identification and intervention with pupils who are struggling to attend. We appreciate that there are many internal and external factors that can become a barrier to attending school.

We also acknowledge that low attendance in return can then become a significant barrier to learning and attainment. The focus of the pastoral team is to support pupils in school and through re-integration if necessary. Our strategy includes effective collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders involved in improving pupil attendance including pupils themselves, parents, pastoral team members and the Education Welfare Service and the Education Welfare Officer.

## Strategies to achieve objectives

### **Strategy 1 - Regular meetings with the pastoral team** (accountable for improving attendance).

Every agenda for a pastoral team meeting will have attendance as an issue (Form tutors, Head of Year, Heads of School and the Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare). The Teacher with Responsibility for Attendance will meet weekly with the school EWO to discuss all aspects of attendance relating to the outlined objectives. All staff are kept updated on all items discussed and have opportunities to forward their ideas to the meetings.

### **Strategy 2 - Raise awareness about the link between attendance and attainment.**

The Head of Year will ensure that attendance is promoted through assemblies. It will also include regular reinforcement of the importance of attendance to school and the link to attainment.

### **Strategy 3 - Whole school attendance target**

The whole school attendance target is 91.9%. This reinforces the high expectations that all staff have for our pupils and reinforces the correlation with 95% attendance and academic attainment.  
2016/ 2017 = 90.3% (baseline) 2016 / 2017 = 91.5%

2017 / 2018 = 91.4%

2018 / 2019 = 90.7%

2019 / 2020 = 89.46%

2020 / 2021 = 91.6%

2021 / 2022 = 87.3%

### **Strategy 4 - Individual Attendance Targets**

Form tutors and pupils set their own individual attendance targets based on their current attendance and their aspirations for their desired attendance during the pastoral period. The personalised attendance targets are set and reviewed half-termly with attendance figures being tracked on the Form Noticeboard. Pupils will receive achievement points for maintaining their target attendance. These achievement points will be awarded by the Form Tutor.

### **Strategy 5 - Attendance Intervention Groups**

In September 2022 'MONITORING AND REPORTING PUPIL ATTENDANCE USING ABSENCE TIERS' was published. This seeks to guide schools in how best to categorise and tackle absence rates in each Attendance Tier. In Priory College we are using our Pastoral teams in a hierarchal approach:

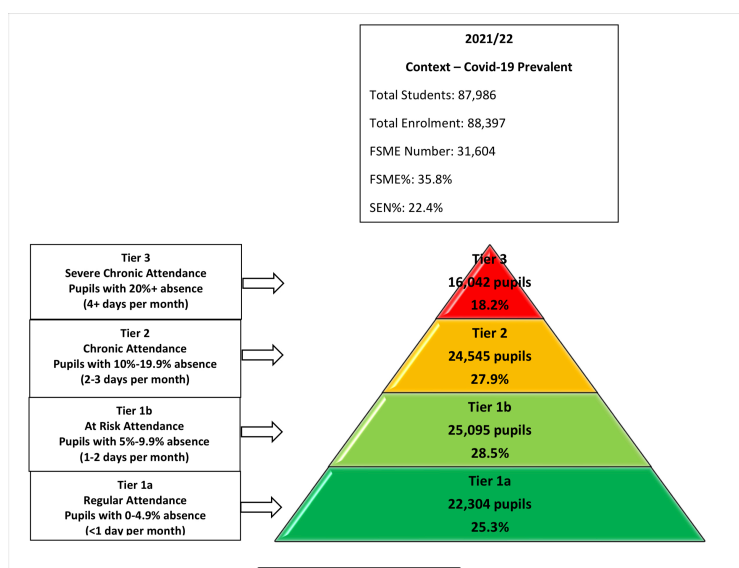
Severe chronic absence - HOY contact for parental meeting and Leader of Key Stage involvement

Chronic absence- Attendance letter (HOY)

At Risk absence - form tutor contact home phone call/Parentmail

Regular Attenders - Well done for consistent attendance/ chat with pupil (form tutor)

100% Attenders - Recognition of outstanding attendance HoY Celebration



## Attendance Statistics and Tiers for Post Primary Schools In Northern Ireland 2021/ 2022

Those pupils who have attendance of under 85% are of a significant concern. These young people will be supported by the Head of Junior and Senior School, the Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare and the Education Welfare Officer. Guidelines indicate that when a pupil reaches attendance level of 85% or below that school should begin engagement with the Education Welfare Officer to work with parents / carers to re-engage young people with school and to explore options to raise attendance.

As recommended by the Department of Education guidance "Miss School = Miss Out," attendance at this level has a strong negative impact on the chances of a pupil achieving 5 GCSEs (A\* - C). Analysis of school data shows that 50% of those pupils in the attendance group of below 85% attendance do not achieve 5 GCSEs at A\* - C. This group is recognised by the Department of Education and our school as a group that without intervention to improved attendance and support at school are statistically likely to underperform and underachieve.

The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare's role is also to work with vulnerable groups to provide pastoral care and support the improvement of attendance to school. Groups who may need additional support as identified by the Department of Education include:- pupils in receipt of free school meals, Traveller children, Roma children, Looked-after children, Newcomer pupils and School Aged Mothers.

The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare is responsible for providing additional tailored support for pupils in these groups. In relation to attendance The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare's is to work with the Education Welfare Officer to improve attendance in the open, waiting list and referred cases.

### Strategy 6 – Rewards

The Attendance Tracker will be distributed to Form Tutors by the Clerical Officer with responsibility for attendance on a monthly basis to allow Form Tutors to update their attendance on the form Noticeboard. They will award achievement points to those who are on target for their attendance.

At the Annual Celebration of Achievement there will be individual prizes given out to all pupils who achieve 100% attendance.

### **Strategy 7 - Consequences**

There are 2 main areas of concern in relation to attendance.

Unauthorised Absence / Truancy (Whole Day) – this will be identified daily by ParentMail absence Text and will be communicated to parents / carers through ParentMail text messaging service. This will be managed by the designated Clerical Officer in the school office and concerns will be dealt with by the Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare. Truancy will result in the pupil being placed on Truancy Report and formal school detention by the Head of Year.

Low attendance rates resulting from sporadic 'days off' with no medical reason. - This type of attendance pattern is much more damaging to a pupil's learning than a 2 week absence due to a hospital operation. This sporadic pattern can often be linked to specific days with unique reasons for the absence. It is important for the reason for absence to be identified by the form tutor and then steps taken to address this issue. This will be managed by the Head of Year

### **Strategy 8 - Parentmail Truancy Call Management**

Parentmail Absence texts that uses the data held within SIMs. Morning Registration and period 1 attendance data will be used to create the list of pupils who have not been registered by 9.30am. The Attendance Clerical Officer will send the parents / carers of the pupils who are absent an automated text message.

Parents / carers should respond to the text message by phone call. The response will be administered by the Attendance Clerical Officer. It will be coded and will automatically be updated on SIMs

### **Strategy 9 - Reporting Attendance to Parents and working with parents to improve attendance**

Attendance is reported weekly to parents via the SIMS parent app. In addition attendance will be reported on in all reports that are sent to parents / carers (Assessment Window 1&2 at Key Stage 3, Assessment Windows 1,2&3 in key stages 4&5 and the Annual Report). Attendance will also be communicated to parents at the annual parental consultation. Throughout parents / carers will be contacted by parent mail with concerns following the monthly attendance audit. They will attend an attendance consultation if the Attendance Pastoral Team has raised concerns about lack of progress following previous intervention strategies.

If the Attendance Pastoral Team has any concerns about any pupil they will contact home to discuss their concerns and try to agree a pastoral pathway that will improve attendance.

### **Strategy 10 - Working with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to improve attendance**

Once a pupil's attendance falls below 85% the school are required to inform the Education Welfare Officer. We have created a new role to provide additional targeted interventions for pupils who fall into this attendance group. The Education Welfare Officer will work mainly with the The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare in relation to pupils who have been referred to the Educational Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer will link with the The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare's on a weekly basis to assess progress with the referrals of pupils whose attendance is below 85%.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Parents / Carers are responsible for ensuring their child received a suitable education.

Pupils are responsible for knowing their attendance percentage and working with their form tutor to set attendance targets. Pupils have individual responsibility for their own attendance at school. Form Tutors are responsible for helping pupils to set and review their attendance targets. Form Tutors are also responsible for awarding pupils achievement points for achieving their attendance targets.

Heads of Year and Leaders of Key Stage are responsible for ensuring attendance receives a high priority in year group assemblies.

Heads of Year are responsible for leading the Intervention groups and are responsible for leading their pastoral team in relation to the Attendance Policy. The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare is responsible for building and maintaining a good working relationship with the Education Welfare Officer. The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare is responsible for the less than 85% attendance Intervention Group, attending the Attendance Team meetings and all scheduled Education Welfare Officer Meetings with parents and the Education Welfare Officer. A key duty of this role is to form positive and effective relationships with parents / carers of pupils with attendance less than 85% in an effort to re-engage young people with learning and improve attendance.

Education Welfare Officer, Beverley Lawther, is part of the Education Welfare Service provided by the Education Authority who work to support young people to re-engage with education. The Education Welfare Officer will work primarily with The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare in school. They will ensure that the Education Welfare Officer is aware of the school Attendance and Punctuality Policy and will meet weekly to monitor progress.

The Leader of Pastoral Care and Welfare is responsible for consultation, writing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy and its annual review.

## **Punctuality**

It is important for pupils to be on time at the start of the school day, and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others.

- The school day begins at 8.50 am with Form class registration until 9.10am
- All lateness is recorded daily, arrival after 8.55am and before the close of registration will be marked with an L
- Arrival after the close of registration and after 9.30am will be marked as a U as per Deni guidance. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M.
- Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils.

In the event that a child is late to school after 8.55am they must sign in at the school office where they will receive a late detention to be served that day at morning break

Where a child has a medical or dental appointment the child will not serve a detention if the parent rings into the school office **prior** to their arrival, **or** can show an appointment card issued by the relevant healthcare provider

A child will not serve a detention in the event if the school bus being late

A ParentMail alert will be sent to all those whose child is absent just prior to 11.10, and to avoid these being sent out in error any child who is late must sign in at the school office.

Where a child is late more than 4 times in a month they will have a formal after school detention.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

Students will ensure that they sign in at the school office after 8.55am

The Form Tutor will track patterns of poor punctuality and inform parents in a timely manner.

The class teacher will ensure that the register is accurate and will escort students to detention at the end of period 2.

The School Office will email a list of those in late detention prior to 11.00 and send a ParentMail alert to absentees.

Heads of Year will supervise break detention and keep a record of non attendance .

#### Attendance Coding

The Department of Education Pupil Attendance Coded (Circular 2010 / 07)

##### Code Description

/ Present AM

\ Present PM

A Artistic Endeavour

B Bereavement

C Suspended

D No reason provided for absence

F Family Holiday (agreed)

G Family Holiday (not agreed)

H Other Absence

I Illness (not medical / dental)

L Late (before registration closed)

M Medical / Dental Appointments

N No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code)

O Other Exceptional Circumstances

P Approved Sporting Activity

R Religious Observance

S Study Leave

U Late (after registration closes)

V Educational Visit

W Work experience

X Only Staff should attend

Y Exceptional Closure / Severe Weather

\* Not on Roll

# Holiday for all

! No attendance required

1 Alternative Education Provision (organised by EA)

2 Home / Hospital Tuition (organised by EA)

- 3 Elective Home Education
- 4 Pupil Referral Unit
- 5 Another Mainstream School (under EF)
- 6 Training Organisation (under EF)
- 7 FE College (under EF)
- 8 Intensive Support Learning Unit
- 9 CAMHS
- N changes to D after 5 days (if no reason for absence is provided)

#### Record Keeping

Records of Attendance and Punctuality are kept using the SIMs system.

ParentMail correspondence between school and parents / carers will be processed and recorded by the Attendance Officer.

Form Tutors will record attendance at form time and will be responsible for recording form class attendance targets.

Class teachers will record attendance each period throughout the day in lesson monitor.

Letters sent to parents / carers for parents consultations related to attendance are automatically saved into the students file

The Attendance Officer is responsible for Attendance Administration.

#### Review of Policy

The Attendance Policy will be reviewed annually.



