Purwell Primary School

Attendance Policy

2026

To be approved by the Governing Body, for immediate implementation, on 22nd June 2026

To be reviewed – June 2028

Purwell values and attendance

At Purwell Primary School, we believe that good attendance reflects and supports our core values of friendship, honesty, perseverance, opportunity and equity. Regular attendance enables children to build strong relationships, access the full range of learning opportunities available to them, and develop the resilience needed to succeed. We work honestly and collaboratively with families to overcome barriers to attendance, while promoting equity by ensuring that every child has the best possible opportunity to thrive, achieve and feel fully included in school life.

Introduction and Background

Purwell Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

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

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

We believe the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where our pupils will want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

This policy is compliant with DfE Guidance;
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance
(updated 9th June 2026)

Our staff know and understand their responsibilities for safeguarding and how this links with poor school attendance – ensuring compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, statutory guidance for schools and colleges –https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Targets
This school sets targets in accordance with The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007. The annual target is to keep whole school attendance above 96%. The Headteacher will ensure that the Governing Body has submitted annual targets to the Local Authority, as required.

Expectations
At Purwell Primary school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the SLT Attendance Lead is:
Mr. R. Cano
Admin@purwell.herts.sch.uk

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is Mrs. M. Squires.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- The school will submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- The school will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

Arrival at School
Children should arrive at school between 8.40am and 8.50am. They should enter the school through the playground gates to either the infant or junior playground. Infant children should be accompanied whilst they wait on the playground. If the weather is very bad, infant and early years children should be sent straight into their classroom. Children from all year groups will be taken into class by their teachers at 8:50am. **The school day starts at 8:50am and ends at 3:15pm.** Classroom external doors should be closed at 8:55am.

For the safety of the children they are not allowed to use the main entrance used by vehicles because of the obvious dangers.

Registration
Registers are taken at 8.55am and at 1.05pm. Registers close at 9.20am and 1.30pm. Registers are marked consistently by staff, and every child must have a mark in the register for every session. Any pupil arriving after closure of the register will be marked with the code U which means absent for the whole of the session. Registers are marked in accordance with DfE guidance.

Lateness
- Any pupil arriving after 8.55am should report to the School Office.
- The register will be open for no longer than 30 minutes after the session begins.
- A member of the school office staff will record the late arrival to school.
- A member of the school office staff will ensure that the later arrival is transferred into the register.
- In the event of an emergency, the late arrivals sheet is taken to the Assembly Point.

Following up Lateness
Parents whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of school staff, who will work with the parent(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality.
Initially, the parent would be contacted by the school office to follow up late arrivals to school. If late arrivals are due to circumstances outside the pupil's control, e.g. delayed buses or road closure, then late arrivals are marked as authorised. External agencies, such as the Attendance Team may be informed if lateness continues.

Absences

- Notification must be provided for all absences from school.
- Notification will be accepted from parent/carer or adult family member.
- Notification will be accepted by telephone, email or letter before 9.20am when our register closes.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.20am.
- Should prior notification not have been given, and first day response not effective, either written notification should be given to the class teacher, or an email sent to the School Office address when the child returns to school, noting the illness.
- Notifications are stored with the class register, and stored for the period of the academic year, unless requested otherwise.
- Absences can be authorised for a variety of reasons which may include: illness, medical appointments, family bereavement or moving house.
- Absences can be refused authorisation for a variety of reasons, which may include: holidays, shopping, birthdays, haircuts.
- Absences are authorised by the Headteacher.
- The school may decide not to authorise absence, even when a reason is provided. If there is any doubt about an absence, the decision will be made by the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher would make the decision to unauthorise absence once authorised, and then inform parents.
- All attendance under 90% will not be authorised unless a medical certificate is given. The Headteacher will make the decision regarding authorisation.
- Pupils must attend school on the day of any medical appointments unless the appointment is out of Hertfordshire. For example, if a pupil has a medical appointment in the afternoon, they must attend school in the morning, or if medical appointment is in the morning, they must return to school for the afternoon session. Appointment cards may be requested prior to the appointment.
- In exceptional circumstances, it may become necessary to move pupils to a part-time timetable. For example, medical reasons. In these cases, the anticipated absence will be recorded as authorised.
- The school will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality.

The name and contact details of the school staff member, pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis is:

Mrs Watson or Mrs Robson
Email - Absence-Misc@purwell.herts.sch.uk

9. Leaving and Returning to School during the School Day

- When pupils leave or return to school during the school day, office staff must be notified. Parents are requested to contact the school in writing to inform them of any appointments.
- All pupils should sign out on leaving the school building.
- In the event of an emergency, the Signing in and out book is taken to the Assembly Point.

10. Following up Absence

- The school follows up all absences from school. Prolonged or regular absence from school is dealt with in various ways which might include; letters to parents, phone calls to parents, meetings in school, involvement of the LAAO (Local Authority Attendance Officer) or other professionals. If other professionals are known to be involved, they will be informed of any concerns about school attendance.
- If a pupil is returning to school after a prolonged period, then appropriate support will be given to help them settle back in.

- The Headteacher, in conjunction with external agencies, is responsible for making a referral to ESMA – Education Support Team for Medical Absence when a pupil is likely to be absent for a long time owing to illness.
- The School Office is responsible for completing the EWN1 forms to make the LAAO (Local Authority Attendance Officer) aware that a pupil has been taken off roll (forms are kept in the School Office).

The school follows the Hertfordshire County Council guidance on Exclusions.

11. First Day Response

- The school uses First Day Response. This means that if the school has not received notification regarding absence, an attempt is made to contact the parent or carer.
- This is for all pupils absent from school where no reason has been received for their absence.
- First day response is carried out by the School Office staff. The School Office staff makes a list of absences when the registers are returned to the school office.
- All first day response calls will be made at 10:30am, after checking with teachers at the beginning of break that the pupil has not arrived in school without coming via the School Office. A record will be made if there is no response.
- The School Office staff will update the registers with any information received from first day response calls.

The first day response process continues on a daily basis until the child returns to school.

Term Time Holidays

The school will not authorise requests for taking family holidays during term time.
Parents are made aware of the school ethos on holidays during term time, through the school prospectus, new parents' meetings and through regular items in the school newsletter and website.
Nursery children are exempt from the above procedures.

Rewards

The school rewards good attendance. Individual pupils receive certificates for excellent, or much improved, attendance, as appropriate.

Classes are rewarded for good attendance on a weekly basis.

Working with External Agencies

The school works in partnership with external agencies and teams to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.

The Headteacher regularly meets the external agencies on an agreed schedule. The school works with individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with advisors, the school will make a formal referral to Children's Services.

Legal Action

Legal action may be taken if deemed necessary by the Headteacher and relevant external agencies.

An extract from *Penalty Notices (Truancy) Guidance for Schools and Academies* issued by Hertfordshire County Council is attached as Appendix A.

A template of the 'at risk warning letter' to send to parents is attached as Appendix B

Publication of Information

- Parents are made aware of the school ethos on attendance and punctuality through the School Prospectus, new parents' meetings and through regular items in the school newsletter and website. Attendance is a regular item on the school newsletter.
- Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed of whole school attendance issues and statistics on a regular basis.
- Attendance is reported to governors, via the Headteacher's report. Pupils are informed about the importance of school attendance via PSHE lessons and school assemblies.
- Members of staff are informed of any changes to the school's Attendance Policy through staff meetings.
- The school shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils, staff and outside agencies.
    - If a parent's first language is not English, any communication will be translated as necessary, if possible.
    - The School Office is responsible for ensuring that termly data is submitted to the DfE.

Child Missing from Education

A child is missing from education if they are of compulsory school age (age 5-16), do not have a school place and no alternative education arrangements have been made for them. A child is not defined as missing from education if they have a school place but are not attending regularly, if they are being home educated or if they attend alternative provision such as a college or Education Support Centre. Some children, often the most vulnerable, are at greater risk of going missing from education.

These vulnerable groups include:

- looked after children
- children living in women's refuges
- young runaways
- children of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- children with long term medical or emotional problems
- unaccompanied asylum seekers
- children of refugees or asylum-seeking families
- children in new immigrant families not yet established in the UK
- children from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background
- children who are privately fostered
- young carers
- children from transient families
- teenage mothers
- young offenders
- children permanently excluded from school

Children missing from education are at greater risk of:

- physical harm
- sexual exploitation
- becoming involved in crime
- demonstrating anti-social behaviour
- abusing drugs and alcohol
- being illegally employed

It is vital therefore that the authority, schools and other agencies work closely together to help safeguard children who may be missing from education.

If the child is missing from education, the school will ensure the details are passed to the appropriate team to secure suitable education. All children missing from education will be monitored by the school until such time as suitable provision is made.

The referral procedure for children believed to be missing from education will be followed if a child they believe to be missing from education comes to their attention.

The Headteacher will contact CME Officer for advice on 01992 556867. To make a referral to the CME Officer.

Children Missing Education Officer:
Central Attendance and Employment Support Team
Hertfordshire County Council
Room 134 CHO 136
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8DF

Extract from *Penalty Notices (Truancy) Guidance for Schools and Academies* issued by Hertfordshire County Council

18. Amount and payment of penalty

The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

Penalty notices are sent by first class post and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting.

Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice and payment by cheque, postal order and by debit/credit card is accepted.

Withdrawal of penalty notices

The Local Authority may withdraw penalty notices in circumstances where it determines that the notice:

- has not been issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct
- ought not to have been issued
- ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient
- has not been paid but it is not appropriate to prosecute the recipient for the offence

Prosecution of unpaid penalty notices

If the notice remains unpaid after the expiry of the payment period and the Local Authority has not withdrawn the notice, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

All decisions to prosecute (or not) rest with the Local Authority.

PLEASE NOTE A SEPARATE LETTER SHOULD BE SENT TO EACH PARENT AND ANYONE ELSE TO WHOM A WARNING/NOTICE IS TO BE SENT

LETTERS TO BE SENT BY 1ST CLASS POST ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

Penalty notice warning letter –

Dear

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Name of pupil ---------- Registered at ---------- (school name)

This is a formal warning that you are at risk of being in breach of the regulations stated above. ---------- (child's name) has been absent from school and the absence(s) has/have not been authorised.

Should the number of unauthorised absence sessions reach 15 or more in the current and/or previous term you will be in breach of the regulations and the Local Authority may issue you with a penalty notice.

Should you be issued with a notice this requires you to pay a penalty of £60 within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Each parent is liable to pay a separate penalty and penalty notices are issued for each child to whom the absence relates.

Payment of the penalty enables you to discharge your liability for the offence for the period in question of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school (Section 444, The Education Act 1996).

Failure to pay the penalty means you are liable to prosecution for the offence, by summons to appear before the local Magistrates Court. On conviction you may be liable for a fine of up to £1,000 per parent. This is a criminal offence which carries a criminal record. The Local Authority will ask for costs of £125 to be awarded against you.

If you fail to ensure your child attends regularly and 15 sessions of unauthorised absence is reached a penalty notice will be issued. **You may not receive a further warning before the penalty is imposed.**

If you believe there are legitimate reasons for your child's absence, please contact me within 5 working days to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

Cc: Factsheet

Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence – Information from schools/academies for parents

This is a warning letter

You have received this letter from us warning that you are at risk of receiving a penalty notice. **This is not a penalty notice** but is an opportunity to improve your child's attendance.

This letter explains that if the threshold for unauthorised absence is reached a notice will be issued. In cases of unauthorised holidays, we will have made it clear that taking an unauthorised holiday will result in a penalty notice being issued.

What is a penalty notice?

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence were introduced by the government as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to support schools to improve attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution and allow parents to discharge their potential liability for an offence of failing to ensure their child's regular[1] attendance at school by payment of a penalty.

When are penalty notices used?

We use penalty notices as part of our whole school approach to improving attendance. Penalty notices may be issued once a pupil has 15 or more sessions (a session is a half day) of unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous school term. The absences may have occurred in a block or a series of odd days and/or unauthorised holiday.

It is a Headteacher's or Principal's decision on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised based on the information provided by you as the parent.

If we decide to apply for a penalty notice, we make this application to the Local Authority and it must comply with Hertfordshire Code of Conduct.

Once issued there is no statutory right of appeal however the Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. **This does not mean that a notice will be withdrawn because you disagree with it.**

What happens if you do not pay?

If the penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority will prosecute you for the original offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. You need to be aware that this is a criminal offence and upon conviction you may receive a fine of up to £2,500 (each parent) and will have a **criminal record.**

If you wish to discuss this letter or the reasons for your child's unauthorised absence, please contact us.

Appendix B

Example – In Hertfordshire the Integrated Service for Learning Attendance Teams administer the scheme and issue penalty notices on behalf of police, schools, academies and other settings to ensure fairness and consistency and in the event that subsequent legal action may need to be taken.

PENALTY NOTICE
S.444A EDUCATION ACT 1996

Please read these notes carefully

PART 1
If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence under s.444 Education Act 1996.

To: Parent name

Of: Parent address

You are the parent of <<pupil name>> (called in this notice "the pupil") who is a registered pupil at << school name>>

Between (date) and (date) the pupil failed to attend regularly at <<name of school>>.

This notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty fine instead of being prosecuted for the offence given above. The amount of the penalty is £60 / £120 in accordance with the table overleaf. If you pay this penalty within the time limits set out below, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence set out in this notice.

Payment should be made within 21 days. If paid after 21 days but within 28 days the penalty is doubled to £120. For payment details please see over.

No reminders will be sent. If payment is not received by ( ) you will be liable for prosecution for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to £1,000.

This notice is issued by:

Date of issue……

Signed…… © Hertfordshire County Council 13

PART 2
Pupil's Name:

Please complete the following and return this notice with your payment to County Lead for Attendance, Room 134, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford SG13 8DF

Name: ……

Address: ……

I attach payment in the sum of £ ……..

Signed: ……..

Date: **……..**

Payment of **£60** should be received by ( ). **No reminders will be sent.** After this date the penalty rises to **£120**. This should be received by ( ) after this date you will be liable for prosecution for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to **£1,000.**

A cheque or postal order (made out to Hertfordshire County Council) should be sent to Room 134, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford SG13 8DF.

If you wish to pay by Debit/Credit Card please contact 01992 555407/8 quoting 742300/26084, your child's name, school and the reference number <<IES reference number>> Without this information your payment may not be processed correctly and you risk prosecution in relation to the non-payment of this fine.

Note
1. Local Code of Conduct

This notice is issued in accordance with a local Code of Conduct drawn up by Hertfordshire County Council. Any correspondence about the code should be addressed to: the County Lead for Attendance, Room 134, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DF telephone 0300 123 4043

2. Withdrawal

This notice may be withdrawn by Hertfordshire County Council if it is shown that it should not have been issued to you or has not been issued to you in accordance with the local Code of Conduct. If you believe that the notice was wrongly issued you should contact the County Council to ask for it to be withdrawn as soon as possible, stating why you believe the notice to have been incorrectly issued. The County Council will consider your request and contact you to let you know whether the notice is withdrawn. If the notice is not withdrawn and you do not pay, you will be liable for prosecution for the offence that your child has failed to attend school regularly.

3. Payment

You should complete the notice above and send or deliver it to Hertfordshire County Council at the address given. If you wish to pay in person you must make an appointment or it will not be possible to receive your payment. If you wish to pay by Debit/Credit Card please contact 01992 555407/8 quoting 742300/26084, your child's name, school and reference number. Without this information your payment may not be processed correctly and you risk prosecution in relation to the non-payment of this fine.

4. Prosecution

If you do not pay the penalty, and the notice is not withdrawn, you will be liable for prosecution for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. You will receive a separate summons for this which will give you notice of the time and date of the court hearing. You will be able to defend yourself and you will be advised to seek legal representation; in some cases you may be entitled to legal aid. Information on obtaining legal advice and legal aid can be obtained from Community Legal Advice 0845 345 4345 Mon- Fri 9.00 am – 8pm Sat 9.00am– 12.00 pm or from www.direct.gov.