

**PRIOR HEATH INFANT SCHOOL
POLICY AND PROCEDURES STATEMENT**

TITLE: ATTENDANCE POLICY

DATE: June 2017

REVIEW: September 2018

APPROVED/MONITORED BY: Children & Learning Committee

AGREED BY: Whole school staff and Governors

The staff of Prior Heath Infant School are committed to developing a sound partnership with the Local Authority (LA), parents, pupils, governors and others to build a school which serves the community commendably and of which the community is proud.

The school staff, alongside the LA, strongly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve our expectation of 100% attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted upon promptly.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at morning or afternoon registration must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Headteacher or other person acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration then the absence must be recorded, in the first instance, as unauthorised

School Day Timings

Registration commences at 8.55 a.m. each morning. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late to registration. Registers close at 9.25 a.m. and children arriving after this time will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence unless the late arrival is due to an exceptional circumstance.

The afternoon session commences at 1.10 p.m. and school finishes at 2.50 p.m.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day unless their absence is authorised by the Headteacher.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss with their teacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers/persons that have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Encourage regular school attendance by supporting the values of good attendance at home and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Support the school with their child in achieving 100% attendance each year.
- Ensure that their child/children in their care arrive at school punctually; prepared for the school day (including extra curricular activities) and that they have completed their homework.
- Contact the school on the first day of their child's absence by 9.30 a.m. and send a note on their return to school.
- Alert the school office of any planned absences well in advance.
- Contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child/children away from school.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Ensure their child is not taken out of school for holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Make sure their child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.

We expect that school staff will:

- Encourage good attendance.
- Ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all children.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children.
- Provide, wherever possible, a safe learning environment.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily.
- Monitor all pupils' attendance.
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of children who are attending irregularly, to express their concern and to clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to school attendance.
- Refer on-going irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Officer.

Leave of Absence

We strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holiday dates which are published a year in advance. Please note: holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

2013 Regulations indicate that leave of absence shall not be granted unless (i) an application had been made in advance to the Headteacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and (ii) the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **“exceptional circumstances”**

relating to that application. 2013 Regulations prohibit the Headteacher from granting leave **unless** those 2 criteria are satisfied.

If a leave of absence in term time is unavoidable due to exceptional circumstances, a Leave of Absence form must be completed no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested absence date. Forms can be obtained from the school office. Reasons for the absence should be clearly stated and parents may be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the request.

If the absence is not agreed and is taken then the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the unauthorised absence is five days or more a fixed penalty notice may be issued.

The Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absence are as follows:

- £60 per parent and per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent and per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

A child's name may be removed from the school roll if:

(i) the pupil failed to return to school within 10 school days immediately following the expiry of the period of leave granted (ii) the Headteacher does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) that both the school and the LA have failed after reasonable enquiry to ascertain where the pupil is.

Persistent Absence

If a child's attendance falls below 90% across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent *absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages children by creating gaps in learning. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If a child's attendance level is falling towards 90% after the first term we will contact parents and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may ask for medical evidence or suggest a meeting with the Headteacher.

Lateness

In order to help children make the best start to the day they need to be in school by 8.50am for registration. Teachers lock their classroom doors at 8.50am and children arriving after this time will need to be taken to the office where they will be let into school. Parents will need to complete the signing in book in the office for fire safety and lunch arrangements. To avoid disruption, parents are not able to accompany their children to their classrooms and any messages for the teacher will need to be left with the office staff.

When a child arrives late to school, there are many consequences:

- He or she misses out on essential learning at the beginning of lessons – in fact arriving 5 minutes late each day adds up to missing 3 entire days of school by the end of the year.
- Children might feel awkward and embarrassed going into the classroom when everyone else is already settled.
- When one person arrives late everyone loses out – the class is disrupted and the teacher must take time away from the other children to explain what has been missed.

Understanding types of absence

Children are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absence:

1. **Authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory. For absence other than illness, this requires a Leave of Absence Form to be completed and returned well in advance of the absence to enable the Headteacher to reach a decision about such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
2. **Unauthorised absence:** this is when the school has not received a valid reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from the school following a parent's request. This includes family holidays, birthday treats, shopping trips etc. If permission is not given and the absence is taken then the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If necessary, an authorised absence can be changed 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 school we suspect that they have been on holiday.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school they inform the Headteacher in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated.

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next.
- The address of the new school.
- The new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school staff have not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Encouraging Attendance

Prior Heath Infant School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment.
- Accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration.
- The Headteacher will monitor pupils, inform parents/carers of irregular attendance, arrange meetings with them if necessary and refer the family to the Educational Welfare Officer if the irregular attendance continues.

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9.30 a.m., the school will endeavour to contact them.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact made, the school should send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns.
- The school should tell their parents that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer.
- Failure to attend school on a regular basis may result in further action being taken by the Local Authority e.g. penalty notices, parenting orders, fines.