



Prior Heath Infant School
Prior Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 1DA

Headteacher: Mrs Ellen McClelland
Tel: 01276 25546
www.priorheathinfant.co.uk

18th October 2017

Dear Parents,

School Attendance

Surrey County Council is committed to raising attendance in order to maximise the educational possibilities available to pupils. Their expectation is that “parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children’s attendance at school and that holidays should be taken during the school holiday period.” The school staff, alongside the Local Authority, strongly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents 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.

Vanessa Curry, our Education Welfare Officer, visits school every term to evaluate the previous term’s attendance figures and if any children have poor attendance may invite their parents to a meeting. Following a recent meeting with Mrs Curry, I am pleased to report that children’s attendance last year was very good and she noted the excellent systems in place to ensure this continues. I would like to thank all parents for ensuring their child’s regular school attendance and for making sure that family holidays are taken out of term time. While absence due to illness is unavoidable, holidays taken during term time are disruptive to the child concerned and also to others in the class.

Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

In accordance with the above Regulations, requests for leave of absence are treated sympathetically but only in exceptional circumstances can they be approved. The policy of Surrey County Council, to which this school has agreed, states that parents who take their child out of school for five days or more during term time, without the authority of the Headteacher, may each be liable to receive a penalty notice. Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the Local Authority must prosecute the recipient for failing to ensure regular school attendance under section 444 Education Act 1996.

Please be aware that **each** parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for **each** child who incurs unauthorised absences, for example, if there are two parents and one child, each parent will receive one Penalty Notice. If there are two parents and two children incurring unauthorised absences, each parent will receive two Penalty Notices, which in this case would amount to £120 each if paid within 21 days.

Authorised Absence

Illness and religious observance are recognised as valid reasons for authorised absence. Although medical/dental appointments are also authorised we request that, where possible, appointments are made outside of school hours. We strongly advise parents/carers to book their

family holidays during the school holiday dates which are published more than a year in advance. A Leave of Absence form, available from the school office, must be completed for any absence other than illness. Reasons for the absence should be clearly stated and parents may be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the request. The Leave of Absence application form and Attendance Policy are available in the Parents section on the [school website](#)

If your child is absent due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, please inform the school by telephone before 9.30 am on the first day of absence. Please leave a message on the absence answerphone, including your child's name and class and the reason for their absence, or speak to the school office. When your child returns, a letter of explanation will be required for our records in addition to the phone call.

Persistent Absence

From September 2015, the Government has reduced the Persistent Absence threshold from 15% to 10%. A pupil is considered to have persistent absence if their attendance falls below 90%. Persistent Absence is monitored by the Local Authority on a half termly basis and if a child's attendance falls below the 90% threshold parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher. The following table shows the cumulative absence session thresholds for 10% absence by half term over the course of a school year:

	HT 1	HT 2	HT 3	HT 4	HT5	HT6
PA threshold 10% absence	3.5 days	7 days	10 days	12.5 days	15.5 days	19 days

As you can see, 90% attendance is equivalent to missing 19 full days of school per year (nearly 4 weeks). Clearly this has a significant impact on your child's progress at school. It is in everyone's interests to ensure that your child misses as little school as possible and we look to you to support us in maintaining good attendance throughout the year.

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 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.

Thank you for your support in getting the children to school for the start of the day.

Please see the attached documents which give information about the impact of poor attendance and lateness.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Ellen McClelland
Headteacher