

PRIOR HEATH INFANT SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURES STATEMENT

TITLE: ATTENDANCE POLICY

DATE: October 2023

REVIEW: October 2024

MONITORED BY: Pupil Curriculum & Attainment Governor

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 Local Authority and Department for Education, strongly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance in order for them to achieve their full potential. 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.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude to any special education needs that the child may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the year in which they reach the age of 16.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at the school, attend regularly and on time. 'Parent' is defined as:

1. Any natural parent – married or not.
2. Any parent who, although not a natural parent, who has parental responsibility as defined in the Children's Act 1989.
3. Any person who has day to day care – natural parent or not.

School Day Timings

The school gates open at 8.30am each morning. Classroom doors open at 8.40am and close at 8.50am when registration commences each morning. Children arriving after this time must report to the school office and 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.

Afternoon registration commences at 1.05 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:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to children and their parents.
- 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 Inclusion Officer.

Absence and Attendance Coding

At Prior Heath, we will take an attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion, we will record whether a pupil is present, attending an approved education activity or

absent as in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2006 as amended.

We will use the national codes as set out by the Department for Education to record and report attendance and absence. Absences will either be recorded as authorised or unauthorised and only the Headteacher can authorise absence. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter, email or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. In such cases, the Headteacher/Governing Body have to judge whether there are exceptional circumstances and may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

We strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holiday dates which are published a year in advance. 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, 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 and are also available on the school website. 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 deemed an exceptional circumstance and is not agreed but is taken then the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the unauthorised absence is five days (ten sessions) or more a fixed penalty notice may be issued.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued:

- Pupils identified by police and inclusion officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice

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 must consider a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence for which the Notice was originally issued.

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 a *persistent absentee*. 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 below 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.

Punctuality

In order to help children make the best start to the day they need to be in school by 8.50am. 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. Office staff will 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 Inclusion 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 Inclusion 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.
- If the absence persists a referral will be made to the Inclusion 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.

Prior Heath Infant School Application for Leave of Absence

Name of child:	Class:	
Home address:		
Date of Absence: From	To:	
Number of school days:		
Please tick the appropriate box below to indicate the reason for this request.		
Medical / Dental appointment (<i>where possible appointments should be made outside of school hours</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Authorised
Visit to another school (name of school & reason):	<input type="checkbox"/>	Authorised
Religious Observance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Authorised
Holiday (please provide additional information below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unauthorised (except in exceptional circumstances)
Special Occasion (please provide additional information below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unauthorised (except in exceptional circumstances)
Compassionate leave (please provide additional information below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	May be authorised
Please include further information regarding this request (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).		
Has your child already had leave of absence in this school year:		Yes / No
I also have children at:		
I have read and understand the information & guidance provided overleaf (please tick):		<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed: (Parent/carer)..... Date:		

To be completed by the Headteacher

Child's attendance level over the last 12 months:	
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Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:

Approved		The absence will be recorded as authorised.
Not approved		The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
Explanatory notes:		
Signed: Headteacher		Date:

Prior Heath Infant School

Application for Leave of Absence

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days. Children are expected to attend school 100% of the time.

Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Please complete and submit the form overleaf if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence. We may ask for proof to back up your request. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the request carefully, taking into account the effect on the continuity of your child's learning and your child's overall attendance rate, and will notify you of the decision. For further information, please refer to our School Attendance Policy.

Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority in accordance with Surrey County Council's Code of Conduct. The Penalty Notice is £60, per child per parent/carer, if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in you being served a summons to appear at the Magistrates Court.

Guidance for parents on pupil attendance

We recognise that there are some genuine difficulties and tensions for parents when they make a decision to take their child out of school.

The following information is offered to help:

Why keep your child in school?

Some areas to consider:

- Children have a right to the education that is planned and provided by school.
- Taking a child out of school is disruptive to the child concerned both at the time, before and after the event.
- Absence may be disruptive to others in the class.
- Children away from school miss the scheduled work. The learning experiences cannot be packaged and sent home and are part of ongoing work. For this reason children may not be able to maintain progress. Groupings may need to be changed as a result.
- Confidence and self-esteem may be damaged as the child no longer feels part of the class and the learning situation has moved forward without them.
- A high number of absences in a class impact on the general level and pace of learning. Teaching may need to be adjusted for the whole class as foundations for the next stage may have been undermined.
- Taking children out of school conveys a hidden message about values that are placed on education: a holiday /special occasion is more important than the learning taking place in school. This attitude may be adopted by the child.

Why take your child out of school?

There may be genuinely exceptional reasons for taking a child out of school as listed overleaf. School policy is that absence for other reasons is not authorised.

If, after taking all the factors above into account, parents decide to take their child out of school for other than exceptional reasons as described, the parents should take responsibility for this decision and appreciate that their child's absence shall be regarded as Unauthorised.

As a school, we seek to provide the very best learning experiences for your children and this principle is behind our views on time out of school. We hope this is helpful and I am very happy to discuss individual circumstances with you.



Mrs L. Chivers
Headteacher