



Prior Heath Infant School
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Headteacher: Mrs Lindsey Chivers

20th October 2023

Dear Parents,

School Attendance

The school staff, alongside the Local Authority and Department for Education, strongly believe that in order for children to fulfil their potential, they need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. 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. Please note that school attendance is monitored by the Local Authority and the Department for Education and children's attendance records are passed on to their next school.

Our Inclusion Officer, Rachel Young, meets with me every half term to evaluate our attendance figures and, if any children have poor attendance or punctuality, may invite their parents to a meeting. At our summer term meeting, Ms. Young expressed concern about a small number of children who were regularly arriving late in the morning. This was reviewed at our meeting last week and Ms. Young was pleased to see that punctuality has improved so far this term and would like to thank parents for their support in getting their children to school on time. This will continue to be reviewed at each half termly meeting. While reviewing our attendance figures for the 2022-23 school year, Ms. Young was concerned to see that there had been an increase in leave of absence requests for term time holidays which will also continue to be monitored.

Leave of Absence Requests

An Application for 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 me to discuss the request. The Application for Leave of Absence form and Attendance Policy are also available in the Parents section on the [school website](#).

If you consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to your request, please include full details alongside your absence request form. Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and the form will be returned indicating whether or not the absence has been authorised.

Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school (absence without the agreement of the school or not covered by a medical note) and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances :-

1. Pupils identified by police and Inclusion Officers (formerly Education Welfare Officers) engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
 2. Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more).
- **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.**
- In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body must decide whether there are exceptional circumstances. They 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.

3. Finally, the issuing of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where it is judged that a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance.

This will be considered when a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 6 school weeks, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you act without delay to secure their regular attendance.

If you have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement in your child's attendance, please contact your child's school or the Inclusion Officer.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours.

This duty applies to the **first five days of each exclusion**. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

Amount Payable for a Penalty Notice

The amount payable for a Penalty Notice issued in any of the above circumstances is currently £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, the local Authority must consider a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence for which the Notice was originally issued.

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 incur unauthorised absences, each parent will receive two Penalty Notices, which in this case would amount to £120 each if paid within 21 days.

Advice and support is available from an Inclusion Officer by contacting your local Education Office as follows:-

North West Surrey - Tel: 01483 518130

Absence due to Illness and Medical Appointments

If your child is absent due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, please inform the school **before 9.30 am**. 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. Alternatively, absence can be reported using the ParentMail App. When your child returns, a letter of explanation will be required for our records **in addition to the original message**.

Although medical/dental appointments are also authorised we request that, where possible, appointments are made outside of school hours. An Application for Leave of Absence form must be completed for absence due to medical appointments.

Persistent Absence

In 2015, the Government 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 may 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.

Punctuality

In order to help children make the best start to the day they need to arrive on time. The classroom doors open at 8.40am and are locked at 8.50am when registration takes place. If children arrive after this time, they must be taken to the school office to sign in and they will be marked as late in the class register.

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. During the first part of the morning, children are given an early morning task to complete. This task allows them to apply or practise key skills that they have previously learnt and as this work is often independent, it contributes towards teacher assessments. If this work is regularly missed, it will have an impact upon your child's progress.
- 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.

The table below shows the impact being late can have over the course of a year.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and remind you that should you require any assistance with your child's attendance or punctuality, we are here to help.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lindsey Chivers
Headteacher