



Prior Heath Infant School

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Headteacher: Mrs Lindsey Chivers

6th September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

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.

Further to our previous communication, The Department for Education has issued new statutory attendance guidance for schools, which took effect on 19th August 2024. As a result, our Attendance Policy has been updated to reflect the new guidance and is attached for your information. An appendix to the policy is our Quick Guide for Parents which is also attached as a separate document, together with our Leave of Absence request form.

Part of this guidance relates to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absence and the updated information is included below. Please take the time to read the information.

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. Children arriving after 8.50am must be taken to the school office to sign in and are recorded as late in the attendance register. Children arriving after 9.20am are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

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. In Reception and Year 1, the first lesson is always phonics. In Year 2, 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 these sessions are 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.

Leave of Absence

A Leave of Absence request, which is available from the school office, must be submitted **in advance** for any absence other than illness. If you consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to your request, please provide us with full details. Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis.

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 Attendance Advice Officers (formerly Inclusion 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 01 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 Surrey County Council 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 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the previous 10 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 the school office or the Attendance Advice Officer (details below).

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 and Consequences for repeat unauthorised absences

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children in a rolling 3 year period since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child**, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

Surrey County Council is not responsible for authorising pupil absence and therefore cannot withdraw any Penalty Notice requests without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Advice and support are available from an Attendance Advice Officer by contacting Surrey Attendance Service as follows:

North West Surrey - Tel: 01483 518130

If you should have any questions or you have any concerns about your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to speak to your child's class teacher or contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Chivers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mrs L. Chivers
Headteacher