



**Prior Heath Infant School**  
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Headteacher: Mrs Lindsey Chivers

12<sup>th</sup> June 2025

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.

### **Attendance Matters**



Our Attendance Officer, Rachel Young, meets with me every term to evaluate our attendance figures. The focus of each meeting is those children who are regarded as Persistent Absentees whose attendance is below 90% and children who are regarded as Severely Absent whose attendance is below 50%. We also discuss and review unauthorised absence and punctuality. During our last meeting, Ms. Young expressed concern about the number of children whose absence had been recorded as unauthorised due to family holidays and has requested that we remind parents of the following information which is included in our Attendance Policy:

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any child's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.

- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration (after 9.20am) are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however it is counted as an unauthorised absence for the session.
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Children's own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Day trips.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

### **Absence Procedures**

If a child is absent from school and this is unplanned e.g. for illness, parents must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before 9.20am**, when the registers close.
- Parents can leave a message on the school absence telephone line, report the absence via the ParentMail app or send an email to the school office: [info@prior-heath.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:info@prior-heath.surrey.sch.uk). The message must include the child's name and class together with the reason for absence. Please be aware that, if you do not include a reason for your child's absence you will receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before deciding as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.20 am.
- Parents must ensure that their child returns to school as soon as possible. Medical evidence may be requested where a child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS Guidance "[Is my child too ill for school?](#)"

A Leave of Absence request, which is available from the school office, must be submitted **in advance** for any absence other than illness or unforeseen circumstances. 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 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,



Mrs L. Chivers  
Headteacher