Cherry Tree Primary School

Attendance Policy 2026

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Approved by the governing board:	September 2026	
Laura Halpin, Headteacher	September 2026	
Christine Mitchell-Brown, Chair of Governors	September 2026	

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Statement of intent

At Cherry Tree Primary School, we believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them and to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and to resolve any difficulties, offering support first.

1. Legal framework

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age from the start of the term following their fifth birthday. Once a child is on our school roll, the procedures in this policy apply. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and, where necessary, to use legal enforcement.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996 and Education Act 2002;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026;
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- DfE: Working together to improve school attendance (statutory guidance, in force from 19 August 2024);
- DfE: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance;
- DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- DfE: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- DfE: Children missing education;
- DfE: Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions;
- DfE: Behaviour in schools (February 2024);
- DfE: Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance (July 2026);
- DfE and DHSC: SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015);
- DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools; and
- Warrington Borough Council: Local code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence.

This policy operates alongside the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Children Missing Education Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- SEND and Inclusion Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy;
- Exclusion Policy; and
- Complaints Procedure.

2. Our school day

Time	What happens
7:45am	Breakfast club starts
8:50am	School gates open for arrival
9:00am	Morning register is taken and the school gates are locked
9:30am	Morning register closes
1:00pm	Afternoon register is taken
3:20pm	End of the school day for infants
3:30pm	End of the school day for juniors

The school week is 32 hours 30 minutes for infants and 33 hours 20 minutes for juniors, from 8:50am to the end of the day, including breaks. This meets the DfE's expectation of at least 32.5 hours a week.

3. Our attendance lead

Our senior leader responsible for attendance is the Head Teacher, Mrs Laura Halpin. She works with the School Business Manager, Mrs L. Lynch, and Warrington Borough Council's Attendance Officer. Parents can contact her through the school office on 01925 755885 or at CherryTree_Primary@sch.warrington.gov.uk.

The Chair of Governors oversees attendance for the governing board.

4. Registers

The school takes an attendance register at the start of the morning session and the start of the afternoon session. For every pupil, the register records whether they are:

- attending school;
- attending an approved educational activity off site;
- absent with leave granted by the school;
- absent for another authorised reason, such as illness or religious observance;
- unable to attend because of exceptional circumstances, such as the school site being closed or transport not being provided; or
- absent without authorisation.

The school shares its daily attendance register with the Department for Education, as required by the 2024 regulations.

5. Reporting absence

If your child is going to be absent, please tell the school on the first morning of absence, by telephone or through the school app, and give the reason and the date you expect them to return.

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will contact you on the first day. If we cannot reach you, we will try your child's other emergency contacts. We may carry out a home visit or ask other agencies to check on your child's welfare.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence; parents cannot. An absence is unauthorised unless the school has received and accepted a satisfactory explanation.

Illness

In most cases a telephone call or app message telling us your child is ill is enough. If there are repeated absences for illness, we may ask for medical evidence, such as an appointment card or prescription.

Medical and dental appointments

Please make medical and dental appointments outside the school day wherever possible. Where this is not possible, your child should attend school for the rest of the day.

Religious observance

We recognise the multi-faith nature of our community. A day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong is authorised. Please tell the school in advance.

Suspension

A suspension or permanent exclusion is recorded as an authorised absence. The class teacher will set work for the first five school days, in line with the DfE's suspension and permanent exclusion guidance.

Other exceptional circumstances

The Head Teacher may authorise absence for other exceptional circumstances, such as a family bereavement or visiting a parent in prison.

7. Leave of absence, including holidays

Parents have no right to take their child out of school during term time. Leave of absence can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and the Head Teacher decides whether to grant it and for how many days.

Requests must be made in writing to the Head Teacher, in advance and before any travel is booked. We will reply to every request in writing (see Appendix B). Missing 10 school days means missing 5% of the school year.

Leave taken without permission is recorded as unauthorised. Warrington Borough Council may consider a penalty notice (see section 13).

Where leave has been agreed, we will tell you the date your child is expected back. If your child does not return as expected, we will contact you and your emergency contacts. If we cannot reach anyone by the end of the next school day, we will report the absence to the Local Authority's Attendance Officer. A child who does not return within 10 school days of the agreed date, and whose whereabouts are not known after enquiries by the school and the Local Authority, may be removed from the school roll.

8. Lateness

The school gates are locked at 9:00am. Pupils who arrive after this must come in through the main reception and are marked as late, with the number of minutes recorded.

The morning register closes at 9:30am. A pupil who arrives after 9:30am without a satisfactory reason, such as a medical appointment, is recorded as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session. This affects their overall attendance.

9. Promoting good attendance

We promote good attendance through:

- positive relationships with pupils and families;
- good teaching and learning that pupils want to be part of;
- regular messages about attendance in the school newsletter;
- weekly class attendance figures, read out in assembly and shown on a chart in the hall;
- termly stickers for 100% and great attendance; and
- annual certificates for 100% attendance.

10. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board will:

- promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents;
- review this policy every year and make sure there are resources to implement it;
- make sure the school has clear systems to record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those educated off site;
- make sure attendance data is analysed frequently to identify patterns and to evaluate interventions; and
- review attendance with the Head Teacher each term, through the Chair of Governors.

The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher leads on attendance and will:

- oversee the termly procedures in section 12;
- make sure staff record attendance accurately and know how to raise concerns;
- work with the Local Authority Attendance Officer;
- make sure pupils educated off site are safe, including through a pre-placement safeguarding visit; and
- report on attendance to the governing board.

The school

The school will:

- have staff on duty on the playground each morning so that children come into school safely;
- follow up every unexplained absence on the first day;
- form positive relationships with pupils and parents;
- offer support to families where attendance is a concern; and
- collect and analyse attendance data frequently.

Parents and carers

We ask parents and carers to:

- make sure their child attends school every day and arrives on time;
- tell the school about any absence on the first morning, with the reason and expected date of return;
- avoid unnecessary absences and make appointments outside school hours where possible;
- request any leave of absence in writing in advance;
- tell the school before 3:00pm if a different person is collecting their child;
- tell us in writing if their child is allowed to walk home alone (Key Stage 2 only);
- tell the school about any change in circumstances that may affect attendance; and
- ask the school for help if their child is having difficulties.

11. Supporting pupils and families

Poor attendance is often a sign of difficulties in a child's life, at home or in school. Please tell us about any change or difficulty that may affect your child's attendance or behaviour, such as a bereavement, separation or domestic abuse, so that we can offer support.

Some pupils may need extra support to attend well, including pupils with SEND, pupils with physical or mental health needs, young carers, migrant and refugee pupils, and children who are looked after or have a social worker. For these pupils we will work with families and the relevant professionals, including the SENCO, the Virtual School Head and health services, to remove barriers to attendance.

Support may include:

- meetings with parents and pupils to understand the barriers;
- an individual attendance plan;
- referral to Early Help or other support services;
- reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND or medical needs;
- a time-limited part-time timetable, only in exceptional circumstances, agreed with parents, reviewed regularly and shared with the Local Authority; and
- rewards and recognition.

12. Managing attendance: our termly procedures

We use attendance data every term to identify pupils whose attendance is falling. A pupil is classed as persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of sessions, and severely absent if they miss 50% or more. We act early, before attendance reaches these levels.

Step	Trigger	Action
1	Every term	Attendance data is analysed by the Head Teacher and School Business Manager, and reviewed with the Attendance Officer and the Chair of Governors. Where a child has a known reason for absence, such as SEND or a medical condition, a different approach may be used (see step a).

Step	Trigger	Action
2	Attendance below 95% for the first time More than 4 late arrivals, or more than 30 minutes late in total, in a term	An app message is sent to parents (Appendix A).
3	Attendance remains below 95% the next term Lateness continues the next term	Attendance Stage 1 letter (Appendix B1), highlighting the concern and offering support Punctuality Letter 1 (Appendix B3)
4	Attendance remains below 95% after the Stage 1 letter Lateness continues after Punctuality Letter 1	Attendance Stage 2 letter (Appendix B2), setting out the legal duty to attend Punctuality Letter 2 (Appendix B4)
5	No improvement despite the steps above	Stage 3 letter (Appendix B5) inviting parents to a meeting to agree a plan of support
6	Attendance or punctuality is still a concern	Stage 4 letter (Appendix B6): the case is reviewed with the Local Authority Attendance Officer
7	Attendance declines further	Parents are asked to meet to agree a parenting contract with the Local Authority
8	No improvement after a parenting contract	The Local Authority considers formal action (section 13)
a	A pupil with SEND or an extended illness	A review letter (Appendix B7) invites parents to a meeting about support. Attendance is reviewed regularly.

13. Legal intervention

Support always comes first. Where support has not worked or has not been taken up, the Local Authority may use formal measures. Warrington Borough Council follows the DfE's national framework for penalty notices and its own local code of conduct.

Parenting contracts

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between parents and the Local Authority or school, setting out the support that will be given and what parents agree to do to improve attendance.

Notice to improve

A notice to improve is a final chance to engage with support before a penalty notice. It gives parents between three and six weeks to improve, with a clear attendance target.

Penalty notices

A penalty notice may be considered when a pupil has 10 sessions (usually five school days) of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks, including term-time holidays. Where a notice to improve is unlikely to make a difference, a penalty notice may be issued without one.

- A first penalty notice is £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

- A second notice within three years is £160 if paid within 28 days.
- No more than two notices can be issued to the same parent for the same child within three years. After that, Warrington uses its fast-track to prosecution process.
- If a penalty notice is not paid, the Local Authority may prosecute.

Education Supervision Orders and prosecution

Where other measures have not worked, the Local Authority may apply to the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order. This gives the Local Authority a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents, and may require parents to attend meetings, parenting programmes or support services. In the most serious cases, the Local Authority may prosecute parents under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

14. Safeguarding and children missing education

Absence, especially repeated or unexplained absence, can be a sign that a child is at risk of harm, exploitation or going missing from education. Staff report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will tell the Local Authority when:

- a pupil has been absent continuously for 10 school days or more without a reason, or has stopped attending regularly;
- a pupil is to be removed from the school roll, before removing them;
- parents tell us they intend to educate their child at home; and
- a pupil is on a part-time timetable.

15. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head Teacher and approved by the full governing board. The next review is due in **September 2027.**

Appendix A: Step 2 app message

"Dear Parent/Carer, we have noticed that [child's name]'s attendance is currently [attendance %], which is below our target of 95%. Every day in school counts. If there is anything making it difficult for [child's name] to attend, please contact the school office and we will be happy to help. Thank you, Cherry Tree Primary School."

For lateness: "Dear Parent/Carer, [child's name] has arrived late [number] times this term. The school gates close at 9:00am. If you are finding mornings difficult, please talk to us. Our breakfast club starts at 7:45am. Thank you, Cherry Tree Primary School."

Appendix B: Attendance letters

The letters on the following pages are sent on school letterheaded paper. Text in square brackets is completed for each letter.

- B1: Attendance Stage 1 letter
- B2: Attendance Stage 2 letter
- B3: Punctuality Letter 1
- B4: Punctuality Letter 2
- B5: Stage 3 letter: invitation to a meeting
- B6: Stage 4 letter: review with the Local Authority Attendance Officer
- B7: Review letter for pupils with SEND or an extended illness
- B8: Leave of absence agreed
- B9: Leave of absence not agreed

CHERRY TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hardy Road, Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0NX

Tel: 01925 755885

www.cherrytreeschool.co.uk

Head Teacher: Mrs L. Halpin B.A. (Hons), NPQH

School Business Manager: Mrs L. Lynch

Email: CherryTree_Primary@sch.warrington.gov.uk

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Appendix B1: Attendance Stage 1 letter

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: attendance

I am writing because [child's name]'s attendance this academic year is [attendance %]. We expect every pupil to attend at least 95% of the time, because good attendance is closely linked to children's progress, wellbeing and friendships.

We sent you a message about [child's name]'s attendance last term, and it has remained below 95% this term.

We want to work with you to help. If something is making it difficult for [child's name] to come to school, such as a health need, worries about school or changes at home, please let us know. Support may be available in school or from other services.

Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 or at CherryTree_Primary@sch.warrington.gov.uk if you would like to talk to me or to [child's name]'s class teacher.

We will continue to monitor [child's name]'s attendance and will be in touch again if it does not improve.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B2: Attendance Stage 2 letter

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: attendance

I wrote to you on [date of Stage 1 letter] about [child's name]'s attendance. Since then it has remained below 95%. [Child's name]'s attendance is now [attendance %], which means [he/she/they] [has/have] missed [number] sessions (half days) of school this academic year.

As a parent or carer, you have a legal duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to make sure your child receives a full-time education. A pupil who misses 10% or more of school is classed as persistently absent.

We would still like to help. Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 to arrange a time to talk to me, so that we can understand what is getting in the way and agree what support might help.

If [child's name]'s attendance does not improve, we will invite you to a meeting to agree a plan, and we may need to discuss [child's name]'s attendance with Warrington Borough Council's Attendance Officer.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B3: Punctuality Letter 1

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: arriving on time

I am writing because [child's name] has arrived late for school [number] times this term, missing [number] minutes of learning in total. We sent you a message about this last term.

The school gates are locked at 9:00am, when registration starts. Children who arrive late miss important teaching at the start of the day, and arriving late can be unsettling for them.

If something is making it difficult to arrive on time, please let us know so that we can help. Our breakfast club, which starts at 7:45am, may also be an option for your family.

Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 or at CherryTree_Primary@sch.warrington.gov.uk if you would like to talk to me or to [child's name]'s class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B4: Punctuality Letter 2

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: arriving on time

I wrote to you on [date of Punctuality Letter 1] about [child's name] arriving late for school. Since then, [child's name] has arrived late a further [number] times, missing [number] minutes of learning.

The morning register closes at 9:30am. If a child arrives after this without a good reason, it is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning. Repeated late arrival after the register closes is treated in the same way as other unauthorised absence and can lead to action by the Local Authority.

Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 to arrange a time to talk to me, so that we can agree what support might help.

If [child's name]'s punctuality does not improve, we will invite you to a meeting to agree a plan.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B5: Stage 3 letter: invitation to a meeting

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: [attendance/punctuality] meeting

Despite our earlier letters, [child's name]'s [attendance/punctuality] has not improved. [Child's name]'s attendance is now [attendance %] [and they have arrived late [number] times this term].

I would like to invite you to a meeting on [date] at [time] with me and [staff member's name]. We would like to understand what is getting in the way and agree a plan of support together.

Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 to confirm that you can attend. If the time is not convenient, please let us know and we will arrange another.

If we are unable to meet or agree a plan, the school will need to discuss [child's name]'s [attendance/punctuality] with Warrington Borough Council's Attendance Officer.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B6: Stage 4 letter: review with the Local Authority Attendance Officer

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: attendance review with the Local Authority

I am writing to let you know that [child's name]'s [attendance/punctuality] will now be reviewed with Warrington Borough Council's Attendance Officer. This is because it has not improved despite our earlier letters [and our meeting on [date of meeting]]. [Child's name]'s attendance is currently [attendance %].

The Attendance Officer may contact you to offer further support. Where support has not worked or has not been taken up, the Local Authority can use formal measures. These include a parenting contract, a notice to improve, a penalty notice and, in some cases, prosecution.

A penalty notice may be considered when a pupil has 10 sessions (usually five school days) of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks. A first penalty notice is £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

We still want to work with you to improve [child's name]'s attendance. Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 if you would like to talk to me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B7: Review letter: pupils with SEND or an extended illness

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: attendance and support

I am writing to invite you to a meeting to talk about [child's name]'s attendance and the support we can offer.

We understand that [child's name] [has additional needs/has been unwell for an extended period], and we want to make sure everything possible is in place to help [him/her/them] attend school and keep learning.

The meeting will be on [date] at [time] with me and [staff member's name]. If you have any medical or professional reports that would help, please bring them with you.

This is a supportive meeting, not a formal step. Please contact the school office on 01925 755885 to confirm that you can attend, or to arrange another time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher

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Appendix B8: Leave of absence agreed

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: request for leave of absence

Thank you for your request for leave of absence for [child's name] from [start date] to [end date].

Because the circumstances you described are exceptional, I have agreed [number] school days of leave, from [start date] to [end date]. This will be recorded as authorised absence.

[Child's name] is expected back in school on [return date]. Please contact the school straight away if there is any delay in returning.

If [child's name] does not return as expected and we cannot make contact with you or your emergency contacts, we must report this to the Local Authority. If [child's name] does not return within 10 school days of the agreed date and their whereabouts are not known, they may be removed from the school roll.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
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Appendix B9: Leave of absence not agreed

[Date]

Dear [Parent/Carer name],

[Child's name], [class]: request for leave of absence

Thank you for letting us know in advance about your request for leave of absence for [child's name] from [start date] to [end date]. I have considered it carefully.

I am sorry, but on this occasion I am unable to agree the request. I know this may be disappointing. The law only allows me to grant leave in term time in exceptional circumstances, and unfortunately the reasons given do not meet this test.

I do need to let you know that if [child's name] is absent during this period, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Unauthorised leave of absence will be referred to Warrington Borough Council, which may issue a penalty notice of £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

We really value having [child's name] in school, and every day of learning counts. If there is anything else you would like me to consider, or you would like to talk this through, please contact the school office on 01925 755885 and I will be happy to speak with you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Laura Halpin
Head Teacher