Cherry Tree School

Belong • Believe • Achieve

Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Jayson Rawlings	**Date:**	April 2026
Last reviewed on:	April 2026		
Next review due by:	April 2027		

1. Aims

Regular attendance at school is the key to enabling children to maximise their potential through access to educational opportunities available to them and be successful in their adult lives. Cherry Tree School values all students and their past experiences so we will work with families to listen, support transitions and build up trusted relationships to better understand barriers to attendance and work in partnership to remove them. When we identify the reasons for poor attendance, we will try to resolve any difficulties together. Cherry Tree School is committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend education

2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice/legislation:

- The Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:
- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) please refer to most recent publication
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Scope

This policy relates to Cherry Tree School.

Students over the Compulsory School Age:

When a student turns 18, permission will be required to share attendance information with parents/carers. Cherry Tree School will also continue to use the statutory attendance codes in order to support analysis of patterns of absence and to promote high expectations, but information regarding absences may be sought from the student, rather than the parent. Section 7.3 of this policy will not apply, but the school placement and course funding may be at risk as a result of low attendance.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Group Head of Operations

The Group Head of Operations is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a monthly basis. They also hold the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy and present to the Incident and Safeguarding committee any concerns and actions taken to rectify and positively impact on individual attendance

4.2 The head teacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at their school and training of staff to understand attendance codes and the process for recording and monitoring attendance.
- Monitoring school level absence data and reporting it to governance
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students and ensuring a first day response to any absence.
- Ensuring plans are in place to improve attendance in line with this policy and safeguarding arrangements are being followed and recorded with concerns escalated.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Ensuring key stakeholders involved in the student's care are fully consulted and aware of concerns about attendance and involved in planning to support improved attendance. Where necessary following the Transition Timetable Policy.
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels
- Ensuring staff who are taking registers understand how to input attendance on the MIS and do so twice daily.
- Ensuring that the MIS is quality assured on a weekly basis and does not have blank attendance sessions
- Ensuring meaningful relationships are built with parents/carers/students which support attendance, reward and reinforce the successes of good attendance and develop a culture in schools which students/parents and carers want to be part of.

4.3 The Pastoral Manager

The Pastoral Manager is the Cherry Tree School Attendance Officer.
The Pastoral Manager/school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the head teacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the head teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The school will monitor attendance in line with Gloucestershire Education Inclusion Service (EIS). The school regularly engages with Attendance teams at the relevant Local Authority. Where students are from out of the local authority, the Pastoral Manager will liaise with those and complete attendance monitoring as per each local authority.

4.4 Class teachers, form tutors and administrators

Staff taking registers are responsible for:

- Ensuring they understand the attendance codes and how these should be used
- Ensuring they record attendance on the MIS during the registration periods
- Inputting the correct absence codes where appropriate
- Escalating any attendance concerns
- Ensuring that there are no ‘blanks’ on the attendance register at the end of each registration period

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school MIS.

School admin staff School admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all students onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. For any students attending off site provision it is the responsibility of the school to ensure they confirm attendance morning and afternoon.

It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- For students of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible. Parents/carers can notify the school by calling 0121 805 1222 and leaving a voice message if outside of school hours or emailing the school Attendance Officer and Pastoral Manager.

Students over 18 should follow the procedure above.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Planned absences must be requested using the Student Leave Request Form available from reception. If you need to make an urgent appointment during the school day, please let us know either by telephone on 01452 701750 or by emailing gemma.watkins@rests-sen.uk

Planned medical absences will be marked as authorised if the school has been notified in advance and evidence of the appointment has been provided.

Family holidays cannot be authorised and will be coded accordingly.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Any student who arrives at school late before the register has closed will be marked as late, if they arrive after the register is closed, they will be marked as late after registration has closed and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Persistent lateness will be monitored accordingly by the Senior Leadership Team and appropriate action taken to support the student and parent/carers to improve this.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, they will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, they will follow safeguarding protocols which may involve calling the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the student was absent
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving other professionals such as an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the student's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with school will work with their Local Authority to review actions.

The school reports to the DfE, Local Authority and Welfare. Where no contact is made, and a child is missing from education for 5 days or more then school will make an unannounced call to the home to check on the child's wellbeing. For over 18's the same procedure will apply.

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

We communicate with parents/carers regularly regarding their child's attendance and will provide an annual summary of their attendance over an academic year via an annual report and through termly reports. Where there are concerns about attendance we will speak with parents/carers at the earliest possible time and agree a plan to improve in the most rapid timescale possible.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be exceptional circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those where it is in the student's best interests not to attend for a limited period of time. Consultation with the headteacher must form part of the decision-making process and the commissioning local authority may be consulted.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via reception. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision
- If the student is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a student to be absent from the site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the student is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the student not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed
- Where a student is being supported through a Transition/Reintegration plan and absence from school is part of the plan please refer to Transition Policy

7. Promoting attendance

7.1 Strategies for promoting attendance

Cherry Tree School employs a range of strategies to improve and reward attendance. These include but are not limited to:

- Providing a safe, engaging and caring environment which is conducive to learning through development of positive relationships and meeting of individual needs.
- The delivery of clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to students and families through regular communication and on admission and transition events
- Rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness
- The monitoring of whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions
- Robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME)
- Support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)

- The ongoing promotion of ‘next lessons’ and the sequence of lessons to motivate students to be in the classroom
- Prompt and consistent follow up on absence and lateness with students to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- Regular contact with parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality where concerns are identified
- Multi agency approaches supporting students and their families with individual planning through robust reintegration/transition processes.

Attendance to school is rewarded weekly be earning reward points.

If there are any concerns regarding persistent absence, this will be closely monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and Safeguard Lead. Any concerns may be raised in a letter from the school to the parent/carer in the first instance. SLT will work closely with the parents/carers to improve attendance. If the absence does not improve then the school may ask for support from the Educational Welfare Officer from the Local Authority.

7.2 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Cherry Tree School will apply the local City Council 'Support First' framework when addressing attendance concerns, emphasising early help, listening to the child, facilitating support, formalised support stages, and enforcement steps as outlined in the framework. Staff will ensure the voice of the child is captured and early help offered before formal stages.

The threshold for persistent absence is when a student’s overall absence is 10% or more of their possible sessions, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school. A student’s absences may be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both.

The focus on persistent absence (PA) is part of an escalating process led by senior leaders, monitored through governance and understood by the whole school community: staff, students and parents.

Students may have a variety of reasons for persistent or severe absence including, mental or physical ill health, anxiety, complex needs or SEN.

Having assessed the reasons for the PA and analysed its profile, it is important to identify strategies that can be used to address it. In more complex and longer-term cases of poor attendance and persistent absence, interventions may include:

- multi-agency meetings and actions plans
- requests for medical information or information and support from other services
- use of local authority enforcement processes and procedures
- home visiting
- direct work with children and parents to address root causes of absences
- engaging specialist services
- timetable adjustments

- considering options for provision

Each case is different and getting to know the family and the individual circumstances is crucial.

Where attendance cannot be improved through additional support e.g. clinical, educational support, individualisation of a timetable or a transition back into school after a long period of absence with direct interventions then the placement may be deemed at risk and will be monitored. The school will work closely with the family and any other agencies including the local authority to look at what the next steps for the child will be, it may be decided that the school placement is not suitable, and the school will support a transition to another alternative placement e.g. hospital, mental health facility etc.

7.3 Legal sanctions

There will be a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered.

Parents/carers will no longer be able to take their child out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued.

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from education, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine automatically rises to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.

If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them.

Penalty notices can be issued by a local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

7.4 Children Missing Education

Cherry Tree School supports their commissioning Local Authorities who have a duty to identify any student who is of compulsory school age who is not receiving education by:

- Addressing poor or irregular attendance
- Referring poor attendance to the placing LA
- Investigating any unexplained absences as part of our wider safeguarding duties
- Keeping our admissions registers accurate and up to date
- Holding more than one emergency contact number for each student wherever possible
- Amending our registers as soon as changes to our roll are made
- Notifying the LA within 5 days if a student starts or leaves school at a non-standard transition point (for example, joining mid-year or leaving before your school's final year) and provide them with all the information held within the admission register about the student
- Ensuring staff receive safeguarding training which includes identifying who are most at risk of going missing from education with regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Making reasonable enquiries and where necessary safeguarding referrals in line with local authority guidelines for students who aren't attending which applies to students who:
    - Haven't returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or
    - Have been absent without authorisation for 20 consecutive days

Further guidance on CME can be found in the DfE statutory guidance Children Missing Education

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Analysing attendance

Our school uses a management information system to monitor student absence on a daily, weekly, monthly and termly basis. We use this to:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the students it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

- Share information and work collaboratively with local authorities and other partners where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years. At every review, the policy will be approved by governors

Student Absence Request Form

Parents/carers should use this form to request authorisation for planned term-time absences for pupils. These requests will not be accepted in any other format.

The Department for Education makes it clear that schools may not grant any leave of absence for pupils of compulsory school age unless there are exceptional circumstances. Your request will therefore need to include evidence demonstrating that this is the case.

Please note that family holidays will not normally be approved unless there are exceptional circumstances meaning that the holiday could not be taken outside of term time. Term-time holidays will therefore usually be recorded as unauthorised and families may be subject to a fine.

Requests should be made as far in advance as possible to allow sufficient time for the school to consider the case in full and request further information if required. We would strongly urge families not to make any arrangements or commitments until they receive confirmation that an absence request has been approved.

Pupil Name	
Year Group/ class	
First date of proposed absence	
Last date of proposed absence	
Number of school days missed	
Reason for proposed absence, including exceptional circumstances. Please provide appointment letters where possible.	
Name of Parent	
Date request submitted	

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Date of decision		
Name of decision maker		
Decision	Request approved	
	Code for attendance	
	Additional information required	
	Request unauthorised	
	Other (additional notes)	
Return to parent/carer date		