Attendance & Punctuality Policy

School Name	Cherry Lane Primary School
School Address	Sipson Road, Hillingdon, UB7 9DL
Date Policy Revised	September 2026
Date of GB Approval (where applicable)	October 2026
Date of next revision	September 2027

"Attendance Matters……."

Regular school attendance is essential to pupils' education, progress, safeguarding, wellbeing and wider development. Our school's aspiration is for pupils to attend as close to 100% as possible. Cherry Lane Primary School works in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, the London Borough of Hillingdon and other services to remove barriers to attendance and to promote regular, punctual attendance. Cherry Lane's expectations are for full attendance.

Good attendance and punctuality are essential for children's progress and achievement. Children who are continually late are missing an important part of the day including work setting and social interaction with their peers. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. Arrival after the closure of registration is an unauthorised absence in accordance with the government guidance.

Nursery attendance is non-statutory. The school nevertheless encourages regular attendance and punctuality because positive routines established early support children's transition into compulsory education.

Attendance Expectations:

The DfE expect pupils to attend school at least 95% of the time. School and parents/carers are required to work together to ensure that all pupils reach this target. This policy sets out the roles, responsibilities and action that may be taken in order to achieve good attendance.

Why Attendance is so important:

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents/carers and permitting absences from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution. A child who is not in school is missing out on a part of his/her education and is being deprived of the learning that may provide access to future employment and opportunities.

We as a school will:

- Welcome children back from an absence and ensure their reintegration is a smooth as possible
- Maintain an accurate attendance register as a legal record and use the statutory attendance codes correctly – these are legal documents.

  Key Stage 1 8.50am and 1.10pm
  Key Stage 2 8.45am and 1.30pm
  Late pupils **MUST** register on the monitor in the School Office

- Monitor attendance and punctuality at pupil level and identify patterns, emerging concerns and pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- Follow a support-first approach, working with pupils and families to understand and address barriers to attendance
- Use truancy call for first day followed by one-to-one calls
- Send letters for unexplained absences
- Initiate individual action plans for Persistent Absentees, any child whose attendance falls below 90%
- Make appropriate referrals to Hillingdon Attendance Support and other services when school-based support is not sufficient, not engaged with, or legal intervention is appropriate.
- Work with families and relevant professionals to support pupils with medical, SEND, mental health, safeguarding or other barriers to attendance.
- Keep parents/carers informed about attendance concerns, support and possible legal interventions.

Parents Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually when they are required to attend.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child cannot attend, giving the reason for the absence. The school should be contacted on the first day of absence before 9.00am and on each subsequent day unless the school agrees another arrangement.
- Provide accurate, up-to-date telephone numbers, email addresses and emergency contacts.
- Work with the school when attendance becomes a concern and engage with support offered.
- Request leave of absence in advance where required. Parents/carers should not make travel arrangements before leave has been agreed.
- Inform the school of any barriers to attendance, including health, SEND, anxiety, family circumstances, transport or safeguarding concerns, so that appropriate support can be considered.
- In the event of being unavoidably late, at either end of the day, please notify the school as soon as possible and report to the late desk

Understanding Absences

There are going to be times when your child has to miss school through illness, bereavement or religious observances, in line with Local Authority guidance. You should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day unless the school agrees another arrangement. It is only the school which can authorise an absence not the parent/carer, common colds or coughs will not be authorised. For children who have been identified as poor attendees, evidence for the absence will be required otherwise it will be unauthorised. Medical or dental appointments will only be authorised if an appointment card/email/text is produced but good practice would be to keep routine check-ups to outside school hours. A child will be expected to attend school before or after these appointments.

Persistent absence (PA)

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions. This means attendance below 90%. Persistent absence is an important safeguarding and educational concern and will trigger appropriate monitoring and support; it does not mean that every pupil at or below 90% will automatically receive a Penalty Notice.

Severe absence (SA)

A pupil is severely absent when they miss 50% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence requires a more intensive, individualised response and may involve multi-agency support.
Attendance is measured in sessions. Each school day normally contains a morning and an afternoon session.

The school may begin attendance monitoring before the PA threshold where attendance is falling, there is a concerning pattern, or punctuality is affecting learning. The school's internal monitoring may therefore begin at a higher attendance level than 90%.

Safeguarding and Attendance

The school recognises that attendance is an important safeguarding matter. In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, all staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can overlap and that behaviours or indicators including unexplained or persistent absence from education, may indicate that a child is at risk of harm. The school will therefore maintain a robust safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly where absences are repeated or prolonged. Any concerns about a child's attendance, welfare or safety will be acted upon promptly and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent / carer must follow the following procedures:

- **Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9am** via phone/email/text/voicemail.
- Give the reason for the absence and provide updates each day unless the school has agreed otherwise.
- Contact the school promptly if the child will be late.
- Respond to school contact where an absence is unexplained.

Late Arrivals

Please arrive at your classroom prior to the start of the school day, listed above. Any arrivals after the school start times and doors have closed, must report to the School Office and will be recorded as late (L), which still counts as present for the session. If you arrive later than this, after the registers close, pupils will be recorded as unauthorised absence (U) for the entire morning session.

Persistent lateness can reduce attendance, disrupt learning and contribute to a pupil reaching persistent absence. The school will work with families to address barriers to punctuality. Late arrival should never be used as a reason to keep a child at home. If a child is late, they should still attend school and be registered through the School Office.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or the Headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Unauthorised Absences

Are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which 'no' leave has been given or the absence has been condoned by the parent unjustifiably. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Attendance support team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or 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 are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session
- Shopping trips, birthdays, day trips or similar activities
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments

- Holidays taken during term time.
- Any other leave that has not been authorised by the school
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Fixed Penalties Notices

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. More information is available from Hillingdon's Attendance support team.

Persistent Absence

Any child whose attendance falls below **90%** for **whatever reason** will be issued with an Individual Pupil Action Plan, which will offer support for the child and guidance for the parents/carers. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to your child's education and we need parents/carers fullest support to tackle the issues. Any absence will require evidence i.e. GP appointment card, prescription repeat form. The child will also be made known to the Headteacher who may arrange an Attendance Panel to discuss the reasons of absence and to offer support where necessary.

Exceptional Leave

DFE guidance states there is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. A family holiday or cheaper travel is not, in itself, an exceptional circumstance. The law permits a headteacher to grant leave of absence during term time only where there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **All requests for exceptional circumstance leave must be put in writing to the Headteacher or Miss Ryder (Attendance Officer). This letter must contain the reason for the request and the dates of absence, including the return date. You may be asked to provide any evidence to support the leave. Headteachers determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.** Parents/carers should wait for the school's decision before making travel arrangements. A referral for a holiday penalty notice can be made if the absence period is 5 school days / 10 sessions. Repeat requests/patterns will not be authorised.

Other exceptional circumstances:

Examples may include serious illness, bereavement or other significant family circumstances. The headteacher will consider the individual circumstances and the likely impact on the child's education and wellbeing.

If children are absent for more than a 20-day period the child can be removed from the school roll and referred to the Local Authority Attendance Support Team.

Absence for religious observance

Leave for ONE day exclusively set apart for religious observance may be authorised in accordance with the statutory attendance code R and relevant guidance. Parents/carers should notify the school in advance.

The school will follow local authority guidance regarding absence for religious observance. All requests for such absence must be made known to the school before the said observance.

Attendance Support Team

The Attendance Support Team are based at the Local Authority and each school has a designated officer from this team. The team can offer support and information to parents and children. They are an independent team who will give impartial advice, if they are unable to resolve attendance issues, they have the power to issue penalty notices or pursue prosecution through the courts. To contact them: telephone **01895 250858** or email **attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk** . Alternatively, we offer the support of our Attendance officer Miss Ryder, Learning Mentors and Mrs. Alice Carroll, Pastoral Manager.

Monitoring

Cherry Lane uses Truancy Call, which sends automated messages to parents where no explanation for absence is given. Parents can then respond by messages that are retrieved throughout the day. It also ensures the well-being and safety of the child. Truancy sweeps are made, within Hillingdon, in partnership with the police and the attendance support team. The attendance of each child is monitored by the Attendance Officer, we particularly look for patterns i.e. Mondays or Fridays. If a child's attendance falls below 93%, we start the monitoring process. If the attendance does not improve through this monitoring period, we will ask the Attendance Support Team to intervene.

Parents of children with poor attendance will be invited to meet with the Attendance officer to discuss any issues but without improvement an Attendance Panel will be initiated led by the Headteacher. The decision to issue a penalty notice or prosecute each parent/carer per child is taken by the Attendance Support Team. **Parents can be fined up to £2500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.** Magistrates can also impose Parenting Orders, which means the parents must attend parenting classes. (Ed. Act 1996 – Section 444 (i) and 444(1A, amendments 2013 reduce the timescales for penalty notices). Penalty notices of £80 per child per parent may be issued as an alternative to prosecution these can rise to £160 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice.

Equal opportunities

All pupils irrespective of individual circumstances should have an equal opportunity to attend school regularly. Children regardless of age, race or gender should receive the same approach towards their reasons for absence.

Summary

- To raise attendance to at least the national level for primary children – 95%
- To give both children and parents/carers the opportunity to recognise the importance of education not just academically but the socialising skills.
- To give parents/carers the chance to discuss any issues regarding attendance or punctuality.

"Every Day Counts…."