

Working together to Improve Attendance Policy

(September 2026)



Cuddington Primary School

(written in line with the DFE's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* July 2026)

Create Learning Trust recognises that the majority of children have 'good' attendance (96% or higher). School staff, leaders, governors and trustees along with our families work together to ensure that their children are happy to come into school.

School non-attendance or lower than expected attendance can impact negatively on children's social and emotional development. There is a direct link between school nonattendance and lower than expected attainment. If a child isn't in school, then they cannot learn with their peers.

Create Learning Trust's schools aim to work closely with families where their child or children have low attendance or are a persistent absentee (90% or lower attendance).

- **Senior Attendance Champions** for improving attendance; **Mrs Beth Hacking (Executive Head Teacher)** and **Mrs Sarah Potter (Head of School)** Contact: admin@cuddington.cheshire.sch.uk or 01270 360030
- **Operational Attendance Lead** (member of staff with delegated responsibility for supporting families to improve attendance); **Mrs Margi Ireland (Family Support Worker)**
- **Governor** who oversees attendance strategy and policy; **Mrs Susie Howard**
- Members of staff who receive absence calls and chase up any unknown absence; **Mrs Heather Clarke and Mrs Kate Jones**
- **Local Authority Contact** (Education Welfare Officer): Claire Billington (CWAC)

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education (*Working Together to Improve Attendance* August 2024 Department for Education)

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. **It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.**

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

How will we support good attendance at Cuddington?

At Cuddington we will aim to treat any root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance, at home or in school. Our core values of Respect and Collaborate will ensure we work closely with families to support them when necessary. **Where a child's attendance falls below 90%, this classes as 'Persistent Absence' as defined by the DfE, and all families will be contacted by school to arrange a support plan to improve this. Persistent and severe (attendance that falls below 50%) absence comes with a legal duty for school to intervene to address and improve this.**

Research proves that children with attendance at these levels are severely impacted in terms of educational outcomes right through to GCSE level, and that this also impacts the child's ability to maintain social connections, confidence, relationships in school and maintain access to the wider opportunities that school offers.

Attendance actions will consider SEND, EHCPs, mental health and safeguarding needs. Where attendance concerns intersect with safeguarding, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or delegate) will be involved and referrals to children's social care made when thresholds are met.

At Cuddington, school staff will:

MONITOR Rigorously use our school's attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. *Mrs Ireland will access the school's attendance data on a fortnightly basis to identify any patterns of low attendance and contact families if necessary. This review is recorded and reviewed for action with the Headteacher for further input.*

EXPECT Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and parents and work within our positive culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT Remove barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school (*this may include a support and attendance plan*)

FORMALISE SUPPORT Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education (see Appendix 2).

Example of the number of days absence and its impact over time

Attendance % over a school year	Equal to number of days absent	Converted to approximate weeks of absence	Weeks of learning lost over 7 years of primary school
95%	9.5	2 weeks	14 weeks
90%	19	4 weeks	28 weeks
80%	38	8 weeks	1 year and 1 month
70%	57	12 weeks	1 year and 8 months

Informing School about an unexpected absence:

- At Cuddington, the start of the school day begins with the **doors opening to children at 8.40am and closing at 8.50am**; the **register is taken at 8.55am**; the **register closes at 9.25am**. Learning starts from 8.40am so we encourage prompt arrival to avoid lost learning time. The school uses updated register codes as issued in the 2024 DfE guidance for attendance. The school day finishes at **3.15pm** for all pupils. Clubs and wraparound care take place after school.
- Please **ring school as early as possible** (01270 360030) and leave a message on the absence line; **Name of the child, class they are in and reason for absence**
- If contact is not made with school, the office will attempt to phone the parental contacts we have on record to ascertain the reason for absence. Attempts will be made daily if absence reporting does not take place. If no contact has been made with home, a home visit will be scheduled from day 2 onwards, to ensure the wellbeing of the child and family.
- If the child remains absent on day 3, then a member of the admin team will call a parent or carer to receive an update as to when it is hoped the child can return to school.
- If the child remains absent on day 5 following an unexpected absence, then a member of the admin team will make a further welfare call and raise this absence with our family support worker (Margi Ireland).
- Our family support worker will contact the child's family to offer any support (if needed) – a letter may be sent to families to outline support offered to parents.

Medical Absence

Only where the school has a **genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity** of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. In instances of **long-term or repeated absences**, seeking medical evidence may be appropriate to assist in assessing whether the child requires additional support to help them to attend more regularly, and whether the illness is likely to prevent the child from attending for extended periods. If a parent proactively seeks out a note from a GP, it does not imply a need for absence unless this is explicit in their letter.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the school's policies and statutory guidance relating to Children with health needs.

If a child is likely to be away for 15 school days or more (consecutive or cumulative), the school will prepare a referral to **Cheshire West & Chester's Education Access Team - Medical Needs Service** using the Medical Education Referral Form (Part A completed by school; Part B completed by a consultant paediatrician, adolescent psychiatrist, or hospital consultant). Supporting evidence from a GP alone will not be accepted.

What happens if a child is late?

Arriving at school late can be quite distressing for a child especially as they have to walk into a full classroom having missed the start of teaching. We would like to stress the importance of **arriving in school ON TIME**. At Cuddington, the start of the school day begins with the **doors opening to children at 8.40am and closing at 8.50am**; the **register is taken at 8.55am**; the **register closes at 9.25am**. By which time the child has a 'U' code (**unauthorised absence**).

- Arriving at school after 8.55am is considered 'Late'
- This will be recorded as 'L' on the child's register
- The child with their parent will need to come to the main entrance to gain access to the school
- The parent will need to record the reason for lateness in the electronic 'signing in' system
- The school's admin staff will inform our Family Support Worker of regular 'lateness'

What happens if school is not informed of a child's absence

- A member of the admin team will contact each of the child's emergency contact numbers to determine why the child isn't in school. This will take place by 9.30am
- If we cannot make any contact with a parent/carer, then a member of the admin team will email the parent/carer asking them to contact school immediately
- if there is no reason for absence it would be marked as an unauthorised absence. A home visit will be undertaken by staff after 2 days of no contact

Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i. no reason for absence has been given
- ii. medical evidence is not received when requested

- iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed

Cheshire West & Chester follows the national threshold:

10 sessions (usually 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

Notice to Improve

Where the national threshold is met, the school and local authority will consider whether support is appropriate and whether a Notice to Improve should be issued before further legal action. A Notice to Improve may not be appropriate in every case, including where an unauthorised term-time holiday has taken place. Decisions will be made individually and in accordance with the local authority's current Code of Conduct.

Fixed Penalty Notice (see also Appendix 1)

The Fixed Penalty Notice amount is **£160 per parent/carers per child** if paid within 28 days, reducing to **£80** (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be charged at a flat £160. Non-payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court (*see appendix 1*).

Family Holidays in Term Time

Cuddington Primary does not support family holidays during term time due to the impact on a child's lost learning during this time.

- Create Learning Trust asks all parents to speak with the Head Teacher BEFORE booking a holiday in term time. A senior leader can then inform parents about the risks linked to taking a holiday in term time and how this will affect their child's attendance and subsequent learning time lost.
- A family holiday would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific facts and circumstances. Where leave is not granted, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a penalty notice may be requested.

For any planned absence (including a family holiday), please call the admin team to inform the senior leadership team. An 'Exceptional Absence Request Form' must be completed (available from the Office, or on our website).

Religious Observance

Absence for religious observance may be authorised where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

We ask that parents/carers notify Cuddington Primary School in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

Local authority references and contacts:

- Cheshire West & Chester Medical Needs Service: MedicalNeeds@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk; Tel: 01244 972825. (Referral form required; GP evidence alone not accepted.)
- Cheshire West & Chester Fixed Penalty Notices / FPN Queries: FPNQueries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk; Tel: 01244 976175.

Appendix 1

Cheshire West and Chester Council Penalty Notice Arrangements

Cuddington Primary School follows Cheshire West and Chester Council's Code of Conduct for Education Penalty Notices and the Department for Education's National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Penalty notices may be considered when a parent has failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly and the absence has been recorded as unauthorised. The school does not issue penalty notices automatically. Each case will be considered individually, taking account of the pupil's circumstances, the support provided, the Equality Act 2010 and whether a penalty notice is the most appropriate action.

National threshold

Schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a pupil has accumulated:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Ten sessions are usually equivalent to five school days. The sessions do not need to be consecutive and may consist of any combination of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised leave during term time and arrival after the register has closed. The 10-school-week period may span different terms or school years.

Reaching the national threshold does not mean that a penalty notice will be issued automatically. The school and Cheshire West and Chester Council will consider the circumstances of the individual case and whether support, a Notice to Improve, a penalty notice or another legal intervention is appropriate.

Support and Notices to Improve

Where support is appropriate, the school will work with the pupil and family to understand and address the barriers affecting attendance.

If support has been offered but has not resulted in sufficient improvement, or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve will usually be issued before a penalty notice is considered. A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for parents to engage with support and secure an improvement in their child's attendance.

The Notice to Improve will set out:

- the pupil's attendance record and the attendance concerns;
- the support that has already been offered;
- any further support available;
- the improvement required;
- an improvement period of between three and six school weeks; and

- the possible consequences if sufficient improvement is not achieved.

A Notice to Improve does not have to be issued where support would not be appropriate, such as where an unauthorised term-time holiday has been taken, or where it is considered unlikely to have any effect on parental behaviour.

Unauthorised leave during term time

A family holiday during term time would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance. Applications for leave will nevertheless be considered individually, taking account of the specific facts and circumstances.

Where leave has not been granted and the national threshold is met, the school may ask Cheshire West and Chester Council to issue a penalty notice. Support or a Notice to Improve would not normally be appropriate where the absence relates solely to an unauthorised holiday.

Penalty notice charges

A penalty notice may be issued to each parent, for each child.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a particular child within a rolling three-year period is £160 if paid within 28 days. This is reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first notice is charged at a flat rate of £160, payable within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first notice. Where the threshold is met for a third or subsequent time, Cheshire West and Chester Council will consider other action. This will often include consideration of prosecution but may include another attendance legal intervention.

There is no statutory right of appeal against a penalty notice. If a penalty notice is not paid within 28 days, Cheshire West and Chester Council must decide whether to withdraw the notice or prosecute the parent for the original attendance offence.

A penalty notice is intended to change parental behaviour and improve attendance. It will only be pursued where the school and Cheshire West and Chester Council consider it an appropriate response in the individual circumstances.

Appendix 2

What does 'percentage attendance' mean?

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their possible school sessions. We will be specifically targeting this cohort of pupils, in an effort to improve their attendance in the future. The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days	Equivalent Sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	1.4 Weeks	45 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	3.4 Weeks	95 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	5.4 Weeks	145 Lessons
80%	36 Days	72 Sessions	7.1 Weeks	180 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	9.3 Weeks	240 Lessons

Appendix 3 - Absence Codes: According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used on the register.
New Attendance Codes from 19th August 2024

Attending a place other than the school.

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity.

Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Code V	Attending an educational visit or trip
Code P	Participating in a sporting activity
Code W	Attending work experience
Code B	Attending any other approved educational activity
Code D	Dual registered at another school (this code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance)

Absent leave of absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
Code M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
Code J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
Code X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
Code R	Religious observance

Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause. - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance

Code Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as unauthorised absence.

Code G	Leave of absence not granted by the school
Code N	Reason for absence not yet established
Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code U	Arrived in school after registration closed