



Attendance Policy

Date: Spring 2026

Review date: Autumn 2027



Little Bears @ Brierley

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Officer	Miss V. Baker	admin@brierley.cheshire.sch.uk
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs H.Cunningham	hcunningham@brierley.cheshire.sch.uk

Purpose and Legal Framework

At Brierley Primary School, we are committed to working in partnership with families to secure good attendance and punctuality for all pupils. Regular attendance is essential to safeguarding children, promoting their wellbeing, and ensuring positive educational outcomes.

This policy is informed by the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024) and reflects the school's legal duties under the Education Act 2002. Our approach prioritises early identification, targeted support, and collaboration with families, alongside proportionate use of enforcement where attendance does not improve.

Importance of Attendance

There is a clear link between poor attendance and lower attainment, reduced wellbeing, and social and emotional difficulties. Missing school disrupts learning, affects peer relationships, and can have long-term consequences.

Parental Responsibility

Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and on time. Parents must ensure their child attends every school day, contact the school before 9:00am on each day of absence, and provide accurate reasons for absence. The school determines whether an absence is authorised.

It is the school that authorises absence, not the parent/carer.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers/Teaching Assistants complete registers accurately and promptly and raise concerns with the Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Officer monitors attendance daily, follows up unexplained absences, works with families to identify barriers, and liaises with senior leaders and external agencies.

The Senior Attendance Champion provides strategic oversight, leads targeted interventions, and ensures compliance with DfE guidance and local authority procedures.

Frequent absence is also a cause for concern. Persistent absence will be investigated by school and the Attendance and Children out of School Service. Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%.

Children Missing Education

In line with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, the school investigates unexplained or prolonged absences. Brierley Primary School follows Cheshire East procedures for children missing education. Where a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established, appropriate referrals will be made.

All staff are aware that children going missing, particularly where this is repeated or prolonged, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. We refer to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024).

Where a child's destination is unknown when they have left our school, we ensure we carry out all necessary checks and refer them as Children Missing Education (CME), using the appropriate notification form on the Cheshire East website, so that they can be followed up on. Staff are aware of the trafficking of children and the importance of rigour around our attendance procedures to reduce this as a threat to our children's safety.

Attendance expectations

At Brierley Primary School pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45 am. The school gates open from 8.30am and teachers greet the children in the morning as they come into school. The gates are locked at

8.45am and children arriving after this time, go to the school office. Registers close at 9:15am. Arrivals after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence is either authorised, such as in the case of illness or of religious observance, or unauthorised, when there is no reason given for such absence or when it is considered that the explanation is unjustified or unreasonable.

- The legal responsibility for ensuring pupils attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers.
- It is essential that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever the pupil is absent from school.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to contact the school whenever a pupil is absent.

Authorised Absences

An authorised absence (one which the school agrees is a reasonable one) will only be granted for:

1. Child illness.
2. Medical appointments.
3. External Examinations (e.g. Music or dancing exams, entrance exams).
4. Educational assessments conducted by approved agencies.
5. Religious observances (e.g. Funerals, major feast days in religions other than Christianity).
6. Education activity at an alternative site (e.g. Participation in a county sports event).
7. Visits to prospective new schools.
8. Very special family circumstances.

Evidence may be requested where appropriate and proportionate, in line with Department for Education guidance.

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence – absences which the school would not consider reasonable, include:

1. A trip to the theatre.
2. Shopping.
3. Your child staying at home because a parent or sibling is ill.
4. Having a haircut.
5. Family holidays.
6. Pupils or parents attending appointments to organise passports.

All such absences need to be avoided in the interest of ensuring that your child develops a good habit of attending school regularly, allowing them to fulfil their potential academically, socially and emotionally.

Procedures

On the first day of and any further absence

If your child is ill or is absent for any reason, please contact the school office for every day of absence, giving your reason for keeping them at home. If no contact is received, the school will send a text message, make a telephone call, and may conduct a home visit if required.

If you need to request a period of authorised absence

Term-time leave will not normally be authorised and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 21 days in advance.

The attendance coding system no longer allows any Cheshire East schools to authorise term time holidays. Any specific absence requests will only be authorised for **exceptional circumstances**.

Although each request will be considered individually, we will never normally authorise a period of absence in term time under the following circumstances:

- At the beginning or the end of school terms/half terms
- Where the child is persistently late, resulting in a substantial period of lost classroom time
- Where the child is persistently absent, including because of ill health.

It is important to note that a child who is authorised to take a 10-day absence during an academic year can only attain 94.7% attendance.

Absence will not be authorised during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

- All requests will be considered individually and such factors as existing attendance record will be considered in making the decision whether to grant leave e.g. absence will not be authorised if it takes a pupil's absence record below 90%.
- Holiday taken during term-time, or failure to return on the agreed date, will mean that the absence is unauthorised (truancy). The deliberate taking of holiday in term time and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term of at least 10 sessions, may result in parents being liable to a Penalty Notice (£160 per child /per parent)
- If a pupil fails to return within ten school days of absence, and there is not good reason for this absence, the school, in discussion with the Attendance and Children out of School Service may report them as missing in education.

Vulnerable children

Attendance of vulnerable pupils is monitored closely. The Attendance Officer works with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, senior leaders, and external professionals to provide appropriate support

Monitoring and Graduated Response

The school prioritises support and early intervention, and enforcement is only considered where support has not been effective. Where appropriate, individual attendance plans will be developed in partnership with families. Pupils' views are considered when identifying barriers to attendance and planning support

Attendance is reviewed at least half-termly. At the end of each half term the Attendance Officer will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be.

We send letters for the following reasons:

Stage 1: Attendance below 95% for the first time - Letter sent to parents to say their child's attendance is causing some concern. This letter will set out the expectations for school attendance and will clearly explain the impact of poor attendance on children's education. The letter will also include contact details for the Senior Attendance Champion in the event that parents require further support.

Stage 2: Attendance falls below 90% or attendance from the first term hasn't improved with no identifiable reason – An appointment will be made for parents to meet with the Senior Attendance Champion in order to discuss patterns of attendance. This meeting will include details of the direct impact poor attendance may have had personally on the individual in question in addition to school working with the family to resolve attendance issues. This may mean offering Targeted Family Support or Extra Help where school may signpost parents for further support or making referrals to other appropriate professionals.

The Attendance Officer will not authorise absence through School Spider and parents are expected to ring and speak to the Attendance Officer in person to explain their child's absence.

If, following stages 1 and 2, there has been no significant improvement – An appointment will be made for a meeting with Mrs McIntosh (Headteacher) to discuss attendance issues. If parents have not engaged with the support from school and/or further services in order to improve their child's attendance, an attendance contract may be introduced with parental engagement and support.

An attendance contract will include:

- Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
- A statement from the school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

In the unlikely event of there still being no improvement – Where there has been no improvement in attendance through lack of engagement from parents, this could lead to additional fixed Penalty Notices and potential prosecution.

The Attendance and Children out of School Team has access to attendance figures and unauthorised absence data. If they are unhappy that attendance is not being improved in these extreme cases the Local Authority is likely to take action against families where persistent absence is a problem.

Penalty Notices and Prosecution

Where support has not led to improved attendance, and where it is proportionate to do so, the school may request that Cheshire East Council considers enforcement action in line with local authority procedures and the Department for Education's guidance.

Penalty Notices may be issued (per parent, per child) in the following circumstances:

Term-time leave: Penalty Notice fines may be issued for term-time leave of 5 or more consecutive days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence threshold: A Penalty Notice may be considered where there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period. The school and local authority retain discretion to act earlier where attendance patterns indicate a clear risk to a child's education or welfare, including deliberate avoidance of thresholds.

Fines are issued per parent, per child. For example, if three siblings are absent for unauthorised term-time leave, each parent may receive three separate fines.

First offence: The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term-time leave or irregular school attendance, the fine is £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. Unpaid Penalty Notices may result in prosecution.

Second offence: Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second Penalty Notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first Penalty Notice, the second Penalty Notice is £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Unpaid Penalty Notices may result in prosecution.

Third offence: On the third offence within 3 years (for either term-time leave or irregular attendance), a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to prosecution, including consideration under the Single Justice Procedure.

Prosecution: If prosecuted for the offence of failing to secure a child's regular attendance at school, the Magistrates' Court may impose fines. Depending on the legal route, this can include a fine of up to £1,000 and, in more serious cases, up to £2,500.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices introduced by the Department for Education and implemented by Cheshire East Council.

If a pupil fails to return within ten school days of absence and there is no satisfactory explanation, the school may, in discussion with the Attendance and Children Out of School Service, make a Children Missing Education (CME) referral.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be considered for pupils with disabilities, medical needs or special educational needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Senior leaders regularly review the effectiveness of attendance strategies to ensure that support is timely and effective.

DfE REFERENCES

This Attendance Policy is written in accordance with and guided by the following Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance and legislation:

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2024)
 - Education Act 2002
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)
 - Equality Act 2010
- National Framework for Penalty Notices (DfE)

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Brierley Primary School recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that all safeguarding and child protection practices are applied fairly, consistently, and without discrimination. The school promotes equality of opportunity and inclusion for all pupils, staff, and families. We are committed to fostering an environment where every individual is respected and supported, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

DATA PROTECTION

All information related to safeguarding and child protection is handled in line with the school's Data Protection Policy, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data Protection Act 2018. Records are stored securely and shared only when it is lawful, necessary, and proportionate to protect a child or comply with statutory requirements. Staff receive training on data protection and confidentiality as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

GOVERNOR REVIEW AND MONITORING

The Governing Board holds overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively. This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to statutory guidance, and approved by the FULL GOVERNING BOARD.

Chair of Governors	Ratified	Review
Mike Birchall 	Spring 2026	Spring 2027