

Christ Church CoE Primary School

School Policy Document



ATTENDANCE POLICY

~ effective from JANUARY 2022 ~

Date Written by HT	December 2021
Date Approved by Full Governing Body (virtual)	December 2021
Date Ratified by Full Governing Body	Spring 2021
<i>Signature of Chair of Governors</i>	
Date of Next Review	July 2022

Christ Church CoE Primary School



Attendance Policy

This policy was formulated to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The Governing Body recognises its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This policy will ensure equality and fairness regardless of race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, disability or age.

Learning & Growing Together in FAITH, HOPE & LOVE.

Rationale

Christ Church CoE Primary School promotes the view that **regular attendance is essential** to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for our children. We are committed to working with parents and other agencies to achieve this. We believe that the whole school community has a responsibility for good attendance.

Aims:

- To raise / maintain attendance
- To improve / maintain punctuality
- To raise / maintain levels of achievement
- To maximise opportunities both in school and in later life

Introduction

We expect all children in Reception (FS2) upwards to attend school every day when school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We are committed to do all we can to encourage our children to attend regularly, and have put in place appropriate procedures to support this.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

We recognise and reward children whose attendance is good. We also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school regularly.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Parent & Carer Support

We expect all parents and carers to support our efforts to improve pupil attendance and to make every effort to ensure their child attends school when they can.

If you have any home-issues which may affect your child's attendance, please arrange a meeting to discuss this with the Headteacher. We will always try to support families in these circumstances.

We keep parents informed of their child's attendance data by sending home individual pupil attendance reports in January, April and July.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Headteacher and Governors. Our targets are challenging yet realistic, and are based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. We always expect our Whole-School attendance to be above 95%, which is considered 'satisfactory' by the Government. Our current target is for 96% attendance, as we want ALL pupils to have good or better attendance while they are at Christ Church.

Above 97%	EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE! <i>Less than 6 days absence a year: Pupils with this attendance should achieve their potential at primary school, leading to the best possible start to their secondary education and life-chances.</i>
95%	SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE <i>Less than 10 days absence in a year: Pupils with this attendance are likely to achieve their primary school targets and will be well prepared for starting secondary education.</i>
90%	PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM <i>19 days absence over the year: Pupils with this attendance are missing a month of school per year and may fall behind in Maths and Literacy; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.</i>
85%	<i>29 days absence in a year: These pupils are missing 6 weeks of school a year, it will be very difficult for them to keep up and achieve their best.</i>
80%	<i>Pupils with this attendance are missing a day for every week of school. It will be almost impossible to keep up with work and they will struggle in school.</i>

Rewards for Good Attendance

Raising the profile of the importance of good attendance can be effective when trying to improve pupil attendance. We are mindful that attendance is going to be impacted by covid and the NHS guidance on self-isolation.

Therefore, this year, we recognise that it will be difficult to reward good attendance without this being perceived as unfair on those who have had to follow national government guidance.

When we feel it is appropriate to do so, we will:

- Recognise and celebrate the best weekly cohort (year group) attendance
- Report the current whole-school attendance on our weekly newsletter
- Present all children who have 100 per cent attendance for a term with a certificate
- Reward 100% attendance throughout the school year with a special certificate and gift

Arriving at School

Our school gates open at **8.40am**, when children are allowed into the school building by their class teachers ready for morning registration. The gates are closed at **8.55am** which is when morning register is taken. This is so that lessons can start promptly at 9am.

Late Arrivals

Any family arriving at school after the gates are closed (e.g. after 8.55am) must enter school through the main entrance and report to the School Office. The reason for lateness will be logged on our electronic register.

Children who arrive between 9 – 9.30am will be marked as 'late' on the register.

Children who arrive after 9.30am will be marked as 'U' - which is classed as unauthorised absence and will impact on overall attendance data. This is not the case if your child is late due to a medical appointment, which has a different code.

School will monitor late arrivals and punctuality. Where data shows that a child is persistently late, the Headteacher will invite parents into school to a meeting to discuss potential support measures as appropriate.

Definitions

AUTHORISED ABSENCE:

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Authorised absences may include:

- ✓ **Genuine illness**
- ✓ **Medical / dental appointments** *(if they cannot be made outside of school hours)*
- ✓ **Close family funeral or wedding**
- ✓ **Days set aside for religious observance**

Wherever, medical appointments should be arranged outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, it is expected that a pupil will only miss part of the day.

Please note: **Only the school can make an absence authorised.** Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping or for a birthday treat during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Unauthorised absences includes:

- ✗ Illness of a sibling / parent
- ✗ Birthday or birthday outing
- ✗ Shopping trip
- ✗ Hair appointment
- ✗ Visiting friends or relatives
- ✗ Term-time holiday, preparing or travelling for a holiday, or resting after a holiday
- ✗ Over-sleeping / being tired

If a child is ABSENT

- Parents /carers **MUST** inform school at the earliest opportunity if their child is unwell or not going to attend school for any purpose. Failing to inform us will trigger a safeguarding concern, especially if we are then unable to contact you.
- Please **use the telephone answer-phone facility** to inform us of an absence - we cannot guarantee a staff member will be available to answer the phone early in the morning and class teachers do not check dojo for messages every morning.
- If an absence message is left on the school answerphone, this will be followed up by a phone-call from the Admin Team to get more details and agree an expected return to school date.
- When a child is absent unexpectedly - or if there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child - the school will contact the parent / carer to clarify their location and check the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- If we are unable to contact the parent / carer, we will contact other adults on their emergency contact list.
- If a child is unwell and absent for three or more days, school staff will phone parents for an update and to check appropriate medical advice has been sought. In particular, we will be checking parents understand what to do if their child has covid symptoms and if a PCR test has been booked.
- All attendance concerns from staff will be relayed to the Headteacher, who will contact the child's parents and/or Nottinghamshire County Council, as appropriate.
- Any communication with parents / carers, including reasons for absence, will be recorded on our electronic registration system.

In all circumstances, school expects a full explanation for any absence from school.

If we subsequently are given reason to believe a parent / carer has lied to staff about the reason for an absence, we will request a meeting to discuss this. Any absence considered not to be justified will be logged as unauthorised.

A series of unauthorised absences or ongoing persistent absenteeism will result in a meeting with the Head and a potential referral to the Local Authority or other external agency.

Our policy is to be compassionate and supportive in these circumstances and to sign-post families to other agencies who may be able to help them improve attendance.

However, parents who are deliberately not ensuring regular attendance at school face the possibility of an external referral or even risk a fine.

Health-related Absences

During the pandemic, we will be following the current NHS guidance about self-isolation and testing. There are special codes for the register for these circumstances.

We are all aware that children sometimes get ill, and we do not expect children who are seriously unwell or showing symptoms of coronavirus to attend school. We follow Public Health England's guidance on illness-related absences and will advise parents about the expected time we expect pupils to be absent from school using their current advice. **In the case of a stomach upset that causes sickness and/or diarrhoea this is 48hrs from the last bout of illness;** this is to reduce the risk of more children becoming ill.

Some pupils might have ongoing medical conditions that result in absences from school, and we will work with families with children who have long-term or regular absences because of a diagnosed medical condition.

However, if there is no known medical diagnosis, but a child is regularly absent from school with a variety of illness or health related issues, we might request a meeting with parents to discuss the cause and impact of this absence. The school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card / text or medical certificate. It is possible that we will suggest a referral to the NHS Healthy Family Team who can work with families and school to help improve a child's attendance. This can be arranged as a meeting in school or as a home-visit, and should be seen as a supportive process as we are concerned about your child's health.

Long-term sickness absence or self-isolation

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days (or in circumstances when they have been advised to self-isolate due to coronavirus), the school will provide home-learning activities so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the health-related absence is likely to continue for an extended period - or becomes a repetitive absence - the school will contact the appropriate support services, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Requests for leave of absence / holidays

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible and reach their potential.

The Department for Education (DfE) does not allow children to take holidays during the school term. However, it does recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances and allows schools to deal with these on an individual basis.

Any parents requesting a 'leave of absence' (including a term-time holiday) need to complete the relevant form and return it to the School Office. This must be submitted no later than ten working days before the requested absence.

All requests will be considered by the Headteacher; who might request a phone-call or meeting with the parent/carer to gather more information. The Headteacher can only authorise term-time leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

Absence due to days-out or birthdays will not be authorised by the School, and might therefore result in a **Penalty Notice or Summons** being issued against the parents/carers.

Repeated unauthorised absences (including term-time holidays)

We would expect parents who are planning an unauthorised absence to speak to the Headteacher in advance of the absence and to ensure that a 'Leave of Absence' form is completed, as appropriate.

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Headteacher or other senior member of staff to discuss the problem. This meeting may include our Attendance Governor.

If the situation does not improve, the School may contact Nottinghamshire County Council support services, who seek to ensure that the parents / carers understand the seriousness of the situation. This will probably include a home-visit.

The Governors, supported by Nottinghamshire County Council, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Where there is no improvement in attendance

The headteacher may decide that – despite additional support and understanding – attendance levels are still a concern and are not improving. In these cases, the headteacher is likely to contact the Family Service Senior Education Welfare Practitioner. They may also make a referral through the Early Help Unit; especially if parents have not engaged with the school to resolve the issue. In these cases, attendance and communication records will be made available to the Family Service Enforcement Lead.

PENALTY NOTICES

The Governing Body of CHRIST CHURCH C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL has agreed to consider issuing **Fixed Penalty Notices** to parents/carers, when the Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct thresholds are met:

When an **unauthorised absence (including unauthorised family holidays) is more than 3 DAYS OR totals more than 3 days (e.g. 7+ sessions) over a 6-WEEK ROLLING PERIOD**, the School will inform the Local Authority and request that the family is issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Local Authority may also consider what measures may be provided to prevent further unauthorised absences, including support and interventions through the Family Service.

Legal Framework

This policy has been written in-line with the Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices (2017). This code of conduct was drawn-up to comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, and the subsequent updates in 2012 and 2013.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent(s) of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996

"If you are a parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly you are guilty of an offence."

This Act introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution; however, parents should be aware that **there is no legal requirement for a penalty notice to be issued before proceeding to prosecution through the magistrate court.**

**These prosecutions are criminal proceedings
and could result in the parents / carers having a criminal record.**

Please note that:

- Penalty notices and prosecutions are in respect of **each parent for each child**.
- Parent includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

Christ Church CoE PRIMARY SCHOOL **gains no financial profit** from the referral and ultimate issuing of a fixed penalty notice. The Local Authority will be responsible for the collection of the penalty, and where a penalty notice is unpaid (and the code of conduct followed) will take legal action for the offence.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Class teachers should monitoring daily attendance in their class. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the School Office immediately. If there are long-term concerns about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher (or DSL/s), who will contact the parents / carers or NCC support services as appropriate.

The headteacher and / or DSL may decide to make an unannounced home-visit if they are concerned about a child's absence and/or wellbeing.

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they receive a termly report from the Headteacher who completes a review of pupil attendance every half-term.

- Any child with an attendance of below 95% will be carefully monitored and improvements in attendance expected.
- Parents of children who are classed as persistent absentees (with less than 90% attendance) without valid reasons (e.g. unauthorised) will be invited to attend a meeting to agree how this can be improved. The families may be referred to other agencies for further support.

The Governing Body has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.