

Christ Church CoE Primary School

School Policy Document



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date Written by HT	August 2023
Date Approved by Full Governing Body	Autumn 2023
Date of Next Review	

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.

1. Aims & Rationale

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

An effective whole-school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations of parents/carers/families, robust procedures and clearly understood responsibilities of school staff.

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.

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 celebrate 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.

Attendance Targets

Our attendance targets are challenging yet realistic, and take into account attendance data for 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 their learning; 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. This will have longer term consequences for them as they move through school.</i>

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance](#) [parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

[School census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

The Nottinghamshire Improving School Attendance Toolkit is incorporated into this policy.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Work with school leaders to set goals and outline areas for support and challenge
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school; benchmark against national and regional attendance data
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Pupils & Curriculum Committee oversee this duty for the Governing Body.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

At Christ Church, this role is fulfilled by our Pastoral Lead, Harriet Jackson.

Our pastoral lead is responsible for:

- Promoting good attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with families
- Delivering targeted intervention and support

The headteacher and pastoral lead work closely together on school attendance issues and are jointly responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with external agencies, when appropriate, to tackle persistent absence
- Deciding when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes on registers (or checking when they are unsure), and submitting this information via Scholapack at morning and afternoon registration (8.55am / 1pm).

Class teachers must also record / pass on any messages from parents/carers (e.g. sent via Class Dojo or verbally) to the admin team, pastoral lead or headteacher, as appropriate.

3.5 School admin staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Contact the parent/carer when a child does not arrive at school and no absence notification has been given
- Alert the pastoral lead and / or headteacher if they are concerned about the absence of a child and when they cannot get hold of a family when a child has not arrived at school
- Check registers have been completed by teaching staff and the correct codes used
- Signpost parents/carers to the pastoral lead if they feel they need more detailed support on attendance
- Print attendance reports for the headteacher and pastoral lead, when requested

3.6 Parents/carers

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. We will always try to support families in these circumstances.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and arrives on time (e.g. before 8.55am)
- Call the school office to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return; parents should not use Class Dojo to report absences as it is the admin team who need to be informed
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child; these numbers will be used if a child has not arrived at school and we have not been notified
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Remain honest with the school about the reason a child is absent

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We keep an attendance register and include all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (8.55am) and once during the second session (1pm).

This indicates whether every pupil 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 information about the original entry, the reason for amendment, the date of the amendment and the name / position of the person who made the amendment.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.
The register for the morning session will be taken by 9am and will be kept open until 9.30am.
The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence (e.g. illness)

We are all aware that children sometimes get ill, and we do not expect children who are seriously unwell or contagious to come to school. We follow the NHS and Public Health England's guidance and will use this to advise parents about the expected time we expect pupils to be absent from school.

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.

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.

In the majority of cases, a parent's notification that their child is ill can be accepted without question or concern. Where the absence is longer than 5 days or where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for appropriate medical evidence (e.g. prescription, appointment card, letter from doctor/hospital).

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. We will only request this if we have a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

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.

Where we have concerns about repeated school absences for health reasons, we may consider a role for the local healthy Family Team / school nurse.

4.3 Planned absence

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

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised, as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school office in advance of the appointment. Where possible, parents should share evidence of the appointment (e.g. appointment card, text message confirmation, letter) to be seen by staff.

Parents/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

If a child is ABSENT from school:

- Parents /carers **MUST** inform school at the earliest opportunity if their child is unwell or not going to attend school. 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.
- 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 from parents 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.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

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.

A pupil 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

Ongoing concerns about punctuality will be addressed by the pastoral lead directly with parents and appropriate support given to help punctuality improve.

Late arrival to school has an impact on pupil learning and wellbeing, and is also hugely disruptive to staff and other learners.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect at school does not attend - or stops attending - without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil'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 pupil's emergency contacts and school staff are concerned about the welfare of the pupil or family, the school may complete an unannounced home visit and / or alert other professionals working with the family.**
- 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
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. **If absence continues, the school will consider escalating their concerns as appropriate – this may include a referral to social care or alerting the Local Authority team responsible for children who are missing from education.**

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels and alert them if they have any concerns about a child's absence. This will be done on a half-termly basis.

5. Authorised & unauthorised absence

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)*
- ✓ **Days set aside for religious observance**

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 include:

- ✗ **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**

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. It is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday; these will be recorded as unauthorised.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible from the school office.

The headteacher may request evidence to support any application for leave of absence.

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.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- **Illness** (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- **Religious observance** – *where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart*
- **Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes** – *this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (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 pupil is attending educational provision.*

Pupils with a long-term illness or other health needs may need additional support to continue education, such as alternative provision arranged by the Local Authority.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable will not be used to help manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat this absence as authorised.

5.2 Legal sanctions

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude. The education act states those with day-to-day care can be considered to have parental responsibility, even if they are not a birth parent. The local authority will include step-parents, resident grandparents (etc) in any legal sanctions, if they are deemed to have 'day to day care'.

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

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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

A fixed-penalty notice will only be requested when it is felt that support is not appropriate, not successful or not engaged with.

What are Education Penalty Notices?

Penalty notices offer parents the ability to pay a fine instead of being prosecuted in The Magistrate's Court. Each local authority sets a threshold of absence for which they will issue penalty notices.

Currently this threshold in Nottinghamshire is absence in excess of 6 unauthorised sessions (or 3 days) over a 6 week period.

The Government intend to legislate in 2023-24 to introduce a national framework for legal intervention which may change the threshold both nationally and in Nottinghamshire.

Penalty notices are most appropriate in circumstances where a family have taken an unauthorised leave of absence (e.g. term time holiday) or where absence is an emerging concern (approximately 80-90% and absences unauthorised).

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 pupil 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.

Notts County Council are aware that a small number of families may choose to withdraw children multiple times a year for unauthorised term time holidays. In these circumstances, The Family Service will consider referring the absence straight to the court rather than issuing penalty notices. This means the family face the possibility of a higher penalty.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We recognise that raising the profile of the importance of good attendance can be effective when trying to improve pupil attendance.

We will promote good attendance through:

- Recognising and celebrating the best weekly class attendance
- Regularly sharing information about pupil attendance with parents
- Presenting children with 100 per cent attendance with a certificate (termly)
- Reward 100% attendance with a special certificate and gift at the end of the school year

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are individual or particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Pay particular attention to pupil cohorts and groups that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This may include: children with a social worker, children with long-term medical conditions, children with special educational needs or a disability, children who are eligible for free school meals, any children from a backgrounds where attendance has been historically low.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Use attendance data to facilitate discussions about attendance and punctuality with pupils and families
- Work with identified pupils and their families to understand and address any reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance
- Signpost and support access to any required services when out of school barriers are identified
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

If attendance issues persist, the school will take an active part in a multi-agency effort to improve attendance.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

Christ Church Primary School fully supports the revised NCC Improving School Attendance Toolkit (available for schools to use from Sept 2023) which has been updated to take into account the DfE Guidance '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*'.

As outlined in this toolkit, we believe that: '*Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing the barriers to attendance at home, in school or more broadly, requires schools and local partners to WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH, not against, FAMILIES*'.

The school will therefore:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable or are persistently / severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The school's response to supporting attendance will include considering emotionally based school avoidance support. Both the Notts Education Psychology Service and Health Related Education Team have developed guidance and resources for schools to use.

We believe that in cases where absence is classed as persistent or severe, every effort should be made by the school to offer support for the pupil and family before legal measures are taken.

This support may be from the school directly or by making referrals to relevant support services.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum of every three years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



APPENDIX 1

Improving Attendance Checklist for Schools

First day telephone calls to query reason for absence and offering advice
Home visits to check pupil / family welfare if there are concerns during a period of non-attendance
Letters sent to parents to share attendance concern
Known / trusted adult to speak to child to hear their voice (age /ability dependent)
Meeting/s with parents/carers to discuss reason why the child isn't attending
Consideration of family circumstances and appropriate support / referrals
When punctuality is an issue, provide the family with an alarm clock or implement a reward system (e.g. sticker chart).
Consider appropriate in-school support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ attending breakfast club ○ meet-and-greet
Contact schools where their sibling/s attend to check absences
Consider family circumstances (e.g. is the child a Young Carer)
Consider if there are any unmet learning or emotional needs of parents or child
Consider if there is a language barrier / communication difficulty
Consider if there are health needs which are impacting on attendance
Make sure a multiagency meeting takes place if there are other professionals working with the family
If absence is attributed to anxiety or mental health, ensure appropriate support mechanisms have been put in place



APPENDIX 2

Attendance-focussed Structured Conversation Phone-call

- I'm calling you today because - just like you - we want to do all we can to be sure your child is successful in school. One way we can help make this happen is to be sure s/he gets to school each day.
- When your child misses school they are missing valuable learning time and this can make her/him fall behind in their school work. Our attendance records show that your child has recently missed x days of school.
- Sometimes these absences add up before we know it, so I thought I'd call to see if you might be able to help us improve your child's attendance.
- How can we work together to get your child to school each day and on time?
Give the parent time to talk; they may begin to talk about ways they can do things differently do get child to school. Reassure them that we all face daily pressures, that parenting is hard, and we want to help support the family in any way we can.
- We would like to invite you to a meeting in school to discuss any barriers there are to good attendance and how we can help you as a school. If there are lots of issues impacting on attendance and you consent to support, we would like to discuss referring your family for 'Early Help' support. This will include an assessment which will lead to a plan of support for you.
- Unfortunately, if you don't consent to support and the unauthorised absences continue, we may need to make an enforcement referral to the Local Authority. This is because we have a statutory duty to work with the LA to enforce school attendance. We obviously wish to avoid this option, and would prefer to work with you to improve your child's attendance.
- Due to our ongoing concerns about your child's attendance, if - in the future - your child is absent due to illness, we will ask that you provide medical evidence so that the absence can be authorised by school.
- School registers close half-an-hour after the start of each session. If your child arrives after the registers have closed at 9.30am, this is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- My staff and I are here to help you improve your child's attendance. Please don't hesitate to let me know what we can do to help make sure your child doesn't miss more school.
- Thank you for taking time to talk today. I look forward to seeing you in school soon.

Summarise this conversation in a letter and send an attendance certificate home with it.