



1. Introduction and aims

This is the agreed vision statement of Christ Church School:

Jesus, The Good Shepherd, promises 'life in all its fullness'. (JOHN 10:10)

At Christ Church we believe every child and adult in our school should be able both to experience life in all its fullness now and to aspire to life in all its fullness in the future.

We all seek to inspire life in all its fullness for all in the school through:

- ensuring a **safe, welcoming and inclusive environment** for children and adults, where everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute and flourish;
- the pursuit of **academic excellence** in all areas, with a determined desire for each child to make the best possible progress as a result of high aspirations, hard work and the development of a personal love for learning alongside the highest-quality teaching and support;
- offering the widest possible **breadth of curriculum** both within school and through extra-curricular activities, enriched by the vast range of opportunities locally and across London;
- **creativity and positivity** in all we do, mixing innovation with tradition;
- planned and spontaneous opportunities for **spiritual development** through reflection, discussion and harnessing curiosity, as well as the provision, at the heart of our school life, of daily opportunities for prayer and worship;
- the development and modelling of **strong, positive and loving relationships**, with peers, amongst the school community and in the wider community;
- the promotion of **respect and compassion for ourselves and for all others**, by cultivating positive emotional and physical well-being, by celebrating the diversity within and outside our school and by encouraging all of us to be empowered global citizens, guided at all times by the example of Christ's compassion alongside the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- engendering a **sense of community, justice and responsibility** for others and for our local and global environment and enjoying working together towards our common goals and expecting and valuing contributions from all.

Our vision is brought to life through our Christian values of **compassion, courage, creativity, community** and **simplicity**.

In line with our vision and values at Christ Church, the aims of our attendance and punctuality policy and practice are:

- to ensure the highest possible attendance and best possible punctuality for all pupils so that they can be in school to experience all we have to offer at school and to make as much progress as possible in both their academic and personal development;
- to ensure there is a culture of high attendance and good punctuality throughout the school community;
- to develop in all children the positive habits of committed attendance and good punctuality: 'good attendance is a learned behaviour' (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024);
- to work constructively and supportively with parents and families in matters relating to attendance and punctuality, having regard both to the statutory guidance and legal framework regarding school attendance and to the individual circumstances of each family, including the diverse nature of our school population;
- to enable children to build and maintain positive relationships with peers – if children are repeatedly absent or late they find it more difficult to make and maintain friendships in school.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Research and national data show that high levels of attendance and good punctuality lead to better outcomes for pupils, both academically and socially, as well as supporting the safeguarding of vulnerable children and families.

Christ Church School intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target is for at least 96.5% attendance for all pupils.

The head teacher leads the school's work on promoting and monitoring good attendance and punctuality (and is the school's Senior Attendance Champion), with support from other senior staff. The school has a culture of high attendance which is the responsibility of all staff members, parents and pupils themselves and which is underpinned by the procedures, expectations and roles set out in this policy document.

2. Legal framework

This policy and our practice regarding attendance and punctuality at Christ Church School operates in line with: The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations (2016 and earlier versions), Education Act 1996, Education Act 2002, The Children Act 2004, and DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have either at school or otherwise'

(a child is of compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday)

DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024 version) is part of a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom.

This policy has been written with regard to the Camden model attendance policy (2024 version) and should be read alongside other school policies and documentation, including our policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, Teaching and Learning, Special Educational Needs and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and our Staff Handbook.

3. Term dates

The school's term dates are agreed and published well in advance. Term dates are available from the school office, on the school website and are shared with parents whose children are joining the school. They are also shared regularly in the school newsletter. Any changes to term dates or INSET days (staff training days) will be advised to parents in advance in the school newsletter – changes will only be made when this is unavoidable. Whilst Governors consider the term dates of other local schools when setting the term dates for Christ Church School, there may be differences if families have children attending more than one school. Parents should check term dates carefully.

4. Attendance and punctuality procedures and monitoring

4.1 Registers

Registers are taken in each class at the beginning of each morning and each afternoon. The school day begins at 8.50am for all classes and registers are taken by 8.55am each morning. Children arriving after 8.55am will be marked late, but present, for the morning session. If a child arrives after 9.05 this may be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Afternoon registers are taken between 1pm – 1.05pm in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes, and at the latest between 1.30 – 1.35pm in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Children who arrive during any session must be signed in by an adult in the school office and a reason provided for their lateness.

Children who leave school for any reason during the school day must be signed out by an adult in the school office and a reason provided for them leaving school.

4.2 Absence procedures - parents

Parents/carers should telephone or email the school office to report their child's absence before 8.50am in the morning, with an explanation as to why their child is absent. A message can be left on the school answer phone. Parents should update the school each subsequent day their child is absent.

4.3 Absence procedures - school

If the school does not receive any explanation of a child's absence, the school office will telephone and/or email the parents/carer on the first day of absence to ask for an explanation. If, after repeated attempts, no contact can be made with any of the emergency contacts that have been provided, in exceptional circumstances a member of staff may go to the house to attempt to make contact and find out the circumstances of the absence. Unexplained absence will be reported to the Local Authority Pupil Attendance Service on day 7 (or earlier if there are safeguarding concerns or other vulnerabilities).

4.4 Monitoring

Registers will be monitored on a regular basis by senior staff in the school and by the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service. Contact will be made by the school with parents whose children's attendance is causing concern and parents will be asked to attend meetings in school to discuss their child's attendance and how the school and parents can work together to support higher attendance (see section on supporting good attendance below).

Analysis and use of data plays an important role in supporting positive attendance and punctuality. School governors and staff have agreed that school staff will monitor attendance at least termly, and usually half termly, with closer scrutiny of the attendance record of any pupils with attendance below 93% at any monitoring point in the year. A pupil with attendance below 90% at any point and for any reason will be monitored even more closely and may warrant involvement from the LA Pupil Attendance Service – these pupils are described as 'persistent absentees'.

Pupils with attendance below 50% are described as 'severely absent'.

The Governors Behaviour and Safety Committee monitors whole school attendance and the attendance of different groups in the school through termly reports from the head teacher. These reports include anonymised information about individual pupil attendance and any actions taken and the impact of these actions.

5. Promotion and support for good attendance and punctuality

5.1 Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The school has the following strategies in place to promote good attendance and punctuality:

- Promotion of a school target of at least 96.5% attendance
- 100% attendance certificates given out at the end of each term and each full year (with acknowledgement and sensitivity that there are many authorised and acceptable reasons why pupils could not be able to attain this)
- Regular information in communications to parents about the importance of good attendance (e.g. in newsletters, parent information leaflets, home/school book) (see Appendix 1 for examples)
- Regular reminders for children about the importance of good attendance and punctuality (e.g. in assemblies, as part of whole school goals and resolutions) including discussion about the range of reasons why good attendance and punctuality is important at school and in the future
- Attendance figures reported to all parents in end of year reports with information about 'what is good attendance' shared (Appendix 3)
- Information about the importance of good attendance and punctuality in meetings for parents who are new to the school (e.g. in Reception parent induction meetings and information, in new parent meetings for families joining other year groups)
- Phone calls/letters to parents whose children have improved attendance over a period of time

5.2 Improving attendance and punctuality of individual pupils

School staff members understand that there may be many different reasons why good attendance and punctuality can be a challenge for individual families. School staff members will always seek to develop and maintain positive relationships with families and to work with individual parents and pupils to provide support for positive attendance and punctuality, before moving to any action or sanction.

The school has the following strategies in place to improve the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils:

- Training for all staff on the importance of promoting good attendance and punctuality for all: promotion of the culture that attendance is 'everybody's business'
- Individual discussion regarding attendance/punctuality in parents' evenings or informally at other times with class teachers

- Head teacher/senior staff letter/email to parents whose children have attendance below 93% or 90% (or high number of late arrivals) in order to raise awareness of level of concern and impact (see Appendix 4 for example letter/email)
- Head teacher/senior staff discussion with parents whose children have concerning levels of attendance or punctuality. These meetings/phone calls include
 - discussion of reasons for absence and any patterns of absence,
 - discussion of the impact that absence/lateness can have/is having on the pupil,
 - offers of support to the family to enable higher attendance or better punctuality
 - reminder that school will closely monitor absence/punctuality for this pupil going forward
 - where relevant, discussion of referral to LA Pupil Attendance Service
- Close tracking of attendance/punctuality of pupils with concerning level of punctuality or attendance, including office staff briefed to let senior staff know of any further absences of these pupils
- Development, implementation and monitoring of an action plan with parents (and LA Pupil Attendance Service where relevant) for persistent absentees
- Phone calls/emails to specific families if they have not informed us of reason for absence
- Involvement of school nurse in discussion about whether children are well enough for school – referral can be made for school nurse support
- Option to request for medical documentation for any periods of illness
- Senior staff on gates at the beginning of the day to provide reminders and support for parents who arrive late, informally on a daily basis and more formally over punctuality focus weeks (Appendix 2: late arrival information leaflet handed out to parents over the focus weeks).
- Referral to the LA Pupil Attendance Service for advice and support with potential legal sanctions (see legal sanctions and actions section).

If parents/carers would like to discuss attendance or punctuality they should contact class teachers or the head teacher, via the school office.

6. Absences

6.1 Authorised and unauthorised absences

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness (of child, not of parent/carer)
- specialist appointments – e.g. specialist hospital appointments
- unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- days of religious observance

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is either where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark (see registers section).
- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, day trips and holidays in term time

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiating court proceedings. (Further information below)

6.2 Appointments in school time – including medical and dental appointments and drama and music examinations

The school does not routinely allow or authorise absences for appointments in school time – parents should arrange all appointments out of school time. In exceptional circumstances, some specialist appointments, such as hospital appointments, may not be able to be rearranged and may be authorised. The school office should be notified of any appointments well in advance.

6.3 Exceptional leave

We adhere to the national DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024) document which clearly states that term time absences can only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**. The DfE “**does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.**”

Parents should write at least two weeks in advance to the Head teacher to request *any* period of exceptional leave. The head teacher will then consider the request, taking into account whether there are exceptional one-off circumstances and any previous pattern of leave in term time/whether requests have been made in the past, in making a decision about whether to authorise any absence. The head teacher will then write back to the parents to inform them of the decision. If a child leaves earlier or returns later than the agreed dates then the head teacher reserves the right to mark the whole period as unauthorised.

Only the head teacher can make decisions on the authorisation of absence and the head teacher is the final arbiter on absence decisions.

7. Legal sanctions and actions

Where there are concerns relating to absence or punctuality, the school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance, school staff members will invite parents to discuss the problem unless the absence relates to leave in term time without permission. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

A referral for legal action may be made to the Local Authority Pupil Attendance Service based on the national framework for penalty notices:

- the ‘single consistent national threshold’ for when a penalty notice **must be considered** is ten sessions (usually equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling ten school week period. The rolling ten school week period may span different terms or school years. Unauthorised absences will include unauthorised absence for lateness.
- a term time holiday taken without permission would count towards the ten sessions.
- a national limit of two penalty notices can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the third (or subsequent) offence(s) other legal prosecution will be considered.
- penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children; for example, two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children would receive a total of two penalty notices.
- from September 2024, each penalty notice is £80 if paid in the first 21 days. From days 22 to 28, the fine doubles to £160 for each penalty notice. For the second offence issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, the penalty notice is charged at a higher rate of £160 for days 1 – 28, with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. The Pupil Attendance Service makes it clear that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost once they have increased, or to simply fine one parent. Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice letter. Any problems with paying online should be discussed as early as possible with the Pupil Attendance Service by ringing 020 7974 1007.
- If a penalty notice is not paid or the Pupil Attendance Service feels that the level of absence warrants court action, the local authority will arrange for a court hearing. There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

8. Work with other agencies regarding punctuality and attendance

Where necessary, the school will work with the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service and/or Safeguarding and Social Care Service to support parents with ensuring good attendance for their children.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The school has a duty to report any children believed to be Children Missing Education in line with the 2016 Children Missing Education DfE statutory guidance. There is more detail about our policy and practice in this area in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9. Monitoring and review of this policy

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governors Behaviour and Safety Committee. There will be an annual high-level review of this policy. The policy will be fully reviewed at least every three years to ensure it is an accurate reflection of current best practice (or sooner if there is a change to the related local or national guidance or legislation).

Appendix 1 – Example general communication with parents regarding attendance

New year, new start! Attendance and punctuality

Please be on time for school every day – the bells ring at 8.50am and children should be in the playground ready at this point, not rushing in the gate or up the hill!!

Well done to the 47 children who received a 100% attendance certificate for the summer term! Our attendance level was back to a good standard in the summer term and our target for next year is at least 96.5% Please make any appointments outside school time. Your child should be in school every day they are well to support learning and friendships.

September newsletter example

On time every day, please

School starts at 8.50am every day and learning starts straight away, when, in our 'morning work', classes are often recapping and consolidating previous learning. If your child arrives just five minutes late every day, this soon adds up to well over an hour of learning time lost over three weeks. Children arriving late also miss the social start to the day with their friends in the playground and often miss out on the information about the routine and plan for the day ahead. There are always some genuine reasons for the odd late arrival, but being just five minutes late every day disrupts your child's learning, their class, staff members and can be avoided by setting off earlier or walking faster! Please make every effort for your child to be at school before 8.50am every day in 2023!

January newsletter example

Appendix 2 – Example punctuality leaflet handed out to parents whose children arrive late in focus punctuality weeks



Christ Church School, Hampstead
A village school in London inspiring life in all its fullness

LATE ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL
School starts at 8.50am

When your child arrives late at school, they miss the teacher's instructions and **the start of their learning.**

Your child may **feel embarrassed** at having to enter the classroom late and find it **harder to settle** into the school day.
This **will** disrupt their learning.

Punctual arrival at school shows commitment to your child's learning and education and helps your child develop the important life skill of being on time.

Children have 190 school days a year, with an average of 5 hours learning per day. This means that if a child is late for only 5 minutes per day, they will miss over 3 days a year as follows:

Minutes late to school per day	Equivalent of missing:
5 minutes	3.2 school days a year
10 minutes	6.4 school days a year
15 minutes	9.6 school days a year
20 minutes	12.8 school days a year

To help your child to get into school on time each day:

- Prepare your child's school bag and uniform the night before
- Set your alarm to give plenty of time for a good breakfast and travel to school
- Allow extra time for delays in traffic or on public transport
- Ask school staff for support if we can help in any way, including by using our daily breakfast club.

Appendix 3 – information about and ‘grading’ of attendance level in annual reports to parents

Attendance:

Numbers of days absent up to June 10 th 8	% of the year present 94.9%	98% or above = Excellent 96.5% - 98% = Good 94% - 96.5% = Satisfactory 90% - 94% = Low Under 90% = Very low	Unauthorised absence % 0%	Numbers of days late 0
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Christ Church Primary School, Hampstead

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☎ 020 7435 1361 E-mail: admin@cchurchnw3.camden.sch.uk

Head teacher: Katy Forsdyke



Date

Dear X,

X - current attendance – 89.92%

At the end of the first term of this academic year, we have undertaken a full review of our registers and children's attendance levels until the end of December xxx. I am writing to all parents whose children have attendance figures below 93% to make parents aware of this and to ask for your support in increasing your child's attendance over the remaining terms.

I am well aware that there are many different and legitimate reasons for absence, including illness, and that you have been keeping school informed about any absences. However, our attendance target for all pupils is over 96% so a figure that is currently under 93% is a concern and attendance of under 90% means that your child has missed more than a week of the first term of the year. I am attaching your child's attendance record for your information.

Please do all you can to ensure that X's attendance is as high as possible over the coming terms. We know that high attendance supports both academic progress and social interactions with peers.

The school and Camden's Pupil Attendance Service will continue to monitor all pupils' attendance closely. Thank you very much for your ongoing support with this and do please get in touch if there is anything the school can do to support X's attendance.

Kind regards,

Katy Forsdyke
Head teacher

Attendance of under 90% means your child has missed the equivalent of half a day every week so far this year.