Christ Church CEP Academy Folkestone

Attendance Policy

Headteacher: Mr Robin Flack (DSL)

Inclusion Lead/Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) :

Miss Rebecca Perkins (DHT/DSL)

Striving to be best version of ourselves, everyday

God said, “You are precious in my eyes and I love you.” (Issiah 43:4)

Inspired by God’s love, we humbly strive to be the best version of ourselves

every day, in every way.

We cherish the dignity of each precious person:

thankfulness, friendship, forgiveness and hope are at the heart of our

inclusive community.

**Date Reviewed & Updated: June 2025 Date Ratified by Governing Body: June 2025**

**Next Review Date: June 2028**

**Statement of Intent**

At Christ Church CEP Academy, we’re dedicated to helping every child thrive. We know that regular attendance is the key to unlocking success and making the most of all the wonderful opportunities school has to offer.

Our approach to attendance reflects the DfE’s *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* statutory guidance (effective from August 2024). This policy sets out what good attendance looks like, how we support it, and the roles everyone plays in helping our pupils succeed.

We believe attendance is a team effort. By working closely with families, the wider community, and external agencies, we create a positive, supportive environment that encourages pupils to come to school every day. To celebrate their efforts, we offer weekly, termly, and annual awards that make attendance rewarding and fun. Together, we can ensure every child enjoys a happy, successful school journey.

# Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Regular attendance is essential for a child’s overall development, allowing them to make the most of their learning opportunities and achieve their full potential. Poor attendance can undermine progress, affect educational attainment, and may increase the risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour.

It is important for parents to notify the school on the first day of their child’s absence. This is a safeguarding measure to ensure your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Please also keep the school updated on when your child will return so we can support them in transitioning back to school smoothly.

Our school gates open at 8:25am and close at 8:40am- pupils are expected to arrive during this time. The school day ends at **3:10 pm for EYFS/3:15 for KS1 and 3:15 for KS2**. We expect all pupils to arrive on time, ready to learn. Pupils arriving after **8:40am**, when the gates close, must report to the school office with their parent, where the reason for lateness will be recorded on the InVentry system. Working together, we can ensure your child has the best chance for success and a positive school experience.

# The Role of the School Staff

At Christ Church, we take a whole-school approach to improving attendance, with specific staff members having key responsibilities to ensure attendance is managed effectively.

The Headteacher, Mr Flack, holds overall responsibility for attendance but delegates the monitoring and reporting role to the Deputy Headteacher/Senior Attendance Champion, Miss Perkins. The DHT is supported by our Family Liaison Officer, Mrs Diwell and the School Office staff. Together, they work to promote regular attendance and address any concerns promptly by analysing data weekly. Attendance is measured by sessions, with two of these per day.

Class teachers play an important role by completing the attendance register at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Marking attendance twice daily is a legal requirement, with teachers recording whether pupils are present, absent, or late, by 8:50am each day, and again after lunch. All teaching staff work with the Senior Management Team to help alert the office if any pupil’s attendance becomes a concern or shows signs of decline.

The DHT/SAC (supported by the FLO and Office Staff) is responsible for ensuring:

* Attendance and lateness records are accurate and up to date.
* Parents provide evidence for medical appointments, hospital visits, or other absences.
* Parents are contacted on the first day of absence if no reason has been provided, as part of our safeguarding procedures.
* Follow-up letters are sent to parents when no communication is received, with a 5 day deadline before absences are marked as unauthorised.
* Attendance registers are updated with the appropriate National Attendance Codes.
* Parents engage in the live updates on their child’s attendance through the Arbor MIS System.

This team effort helps us ensure attendance is managed effectively while keeping parents informed and engaged in supporting their child’s education. Together, we aim to provide every pupil with the best possible chance for success.

# Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

Although the percentage of attendance can be influenced by the time of year, (as absences in the first few weeks of term may present as a higher percentage). As a general guide, the following levels will trigger appropriate responses, although individual circumstances will be considered before action is taken.

* **We aim for full attendance (100%):** We understand that there are genuine illnesses and emergencies, but typically these should not cause a child’s attendance to fall below 97%.
* **95% – 97% attendance**: The FLO will investigate and inform the Deputy Headteacher if there are any concerns; these children could be at risk of dropping attendance and may cause concern. The school may speak to parents to discuss concerns and ways we can support.
* **90% – 95% attendance**: The school may send intervention letters and schedule meetings with parents to discuss any issues.
* For cases requiring more intensive family support, the school may initiate an Early Help Notification.
* If attendance does not improve and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS). If it’s unclear whether a referral is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority Local Authority Attendance Officer for advice.

# Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher, and the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service when appropriate. The following circumstances require a consultation and may lead to a Child Missing Education referral:

* If the whereabouts of a child is unknown and the school has been unable to locate them.
* If a family informs the school that they are moving but another school has not requested the child’s Common Transfer Form (pupil file).

# Lateness

At Christ Church, the register is taken at **8:40am and between 12:35 and 1:20 in the afternoon (depending on Key Stage)**

Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main pedestrian entrance and report to reception - where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code ‘L’).

**The register will close at 8:50am and 1:20pm**. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code ‘U’) and the whole session will be classed as an unauthorised absence in the legal/main register, even though the pupil is in school and recorded as present in the internal register.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice, as these sessions add up.

# Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in line with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct, effective August 2024, under the following conditions:

* 10 incidents of late arrival, after the registers have closed, within 100 school sessions will result in a may result in a Notice to Improve letter being sent to parent(s) by the school These do not need to be consecutive.
* The Notice to Improve letter from the school will lay out a 20 school day period in which no unauthorised absences should be recorded. period during which no further unauthorised absences should be recorded, if unauthorised absences occur a penalty could be issued (one per parent, per child) and/or a statutory attendance intervention (SAI) referral. In consultation with the KPAS (Kent PRU Attendance service)

# Authorising Absence

Taking time off during the school year can significantly impact a child’s learning and progress. The pace of the curriculum and the scheduling of school events mean that any missed instruction is challenging to make up, both for the individual pupil, staff and teachers, and for the class as a whole. Consequently, while holidays can offer enriching experiences and family bonding, we strongly encourage families to use these 13 weeks effectively to minimise disruption to their child’s education. This approach ensures that every pupil can keep up with their peers and make steady academic progress throughout the year.

We also recognise that regular school attendance is crucial for a child’s overall development and academic success. Missing school—even for short periods—can affect their learning, social development, and future opportunities. The DfE guidance allows Headteachers some discretion in authorising absences, but this is limited to **exceptional circumstances**. Only in truly unique situations will a request for absence be considered. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence and does so using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent’s explanation alone as a reason for absence. A letter or phone call from a parent does not automatically authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation for absence is received, it will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absences that will not be authorised:

* Persistent non-specific illness (e.g., poorly/unwell)
* Absence of siblings if one child is ill
* Headlice (with the expectation that treatment is administered promptly)
* Transport issues
* Oversleeping
* Inadequate clothing/uniform
* Confusion over school dates
* Medical/dental appointments lasting more than half a day without very good reasons
* Child’s/family birthday
* Shopping trip
* Family holidays
* Visiting relatives
* Convenience of visiting attractions or events when quiet, for SEN pupils

Persistent unauthorised absence, where 10% or more sessions are missed a working together approach with families and a multi disciplinary team will be promoted. The school will follow procedures before making a referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Local Authority actions may include:

* Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM)
* Home visits
* Liaison with other agencies
* Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct, effective from August 2024.

* A Penalty Notice is issued when a child has been absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during 100 possible school sessions or a 50-day period—these do not need to be consecutive.
* A Penalty Notice can also be issued if an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without justifiable reason.
* After receiving the request for a Penalty Notice, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter with 20 school days during which no unauthorised absence should be recorded.
* If unauthorised absences occur within the 20-day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent, per child).

Exceptional circumstances might include:

* Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad, where evidence shows no leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
* When a health professional recommends absence as part of a child’s or parent’s rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
* The death or terminal illness of a close family member.
* Attending the wedding or funeral of a close family member- this is limited to the day of the event and considered travel if appropriate. (at the Headteachers discretion)

In any of these exceptions, you may be asked for evidence. Each case is judged on its own merits. The Headteacher can authorise absence in ‘exceptional circumstances’ at their discretion, on behalf of the Governing Body (School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024). Once a decision not to authorise leave is made, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation, the case may be referred to the KPAS, which may issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child taken out of school. Failure to pay the penalty in full within 28 days may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

According to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents are guilty of an offence of failing to ensure regular attendance unless they can prove the absence was due to:

* Permission from the school (authorised leave)
* Sickness or unavoidable cause (directly relating to the child, not the parent)
* Religious observance
* Failure by the Local Authority to provide arranged transport

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. When the school makes decisions, it is acceptable to consider a pupil’s previous record of attendance.

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are that the circumstances are rare, significant, unavoidable, and short-term.

An event is considered ‘unavoidable’ if it cannot reasonably be scheduled at another time.

It is important to note that Headteachers can agree to authorise a child’s absence in exceptional circumstances. This discretion also determines the length of the authorised absence.

**When Penalty Notices are issued**, the regulations specify a penalty of £160, payable within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Each parent of each child receives a Penalty Notice. A second Penalty Notice issued to the same parent for the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28- day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority. If a third offence is committed in a 3-year rolling period then a penalty notice cannot be issued by the LA and prosecution will be sought as an alternative which may lead to a fine of up to £1,000 per parent per child.

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in ‘exceptional circumstances,’ but this must be requested in advance. Agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024)

If an absence is not authorised and a holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the LA Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS), which may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Please find below the cascade of communication a Parent or Carer may receive in regards to attendance:

* Late Letter (Code L)
* Late Letter (Code U)
* Absence Letter
* School Attendance Meeting Letter
* School Notice to Improve Letter – including 20 day monitoring period
* School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral
* Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request
* Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)
* Response to Leave Request submitted retrospectively (Not Authorising)
* Unauthorised leave confirmation of PN request
* School letter where they believe a holiday was taken