

Christian Academy of Harlem

Faith. Excellence. Purpose.



Parent & Family Handbook 2027–2028

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Letter from the Founder

Dear Parents and Families,

It is with gratitude, faith, and deep purpose that I welcome you to Christian Academy of Harlem. Founding this school has been a calling placed on my heart—a calling to create a Christ-centered learning environment where children are nurtured academically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally.

At CAH, we believe that every child carries God-given potential. Our commitment is to cultivate scholars who are confident, capable, spiritually grounded, and prepared to walk in the fullness of their purpose. We strive to guide each student with love, structure, and intentionality, ensuring that every scholar feels valued, safe, and supported as they grow.

As a parent myself, I understand the trust you place in a school when you entrust us with your children. It is a responsibility we hold with reverence. Our partnership with families is foundational to our work. We honor your role, your voice, and your presence in this community, and we look forward to walking alongside you in this journey of faith and excellence.

Christian Academy of Harlem was built on the belief that education is more than academics—it is discipleship, character formation, mentorship, and leadership development. Our staff is dedicated to modeling Christ-like behavior in both word and deed, so that every scholar experiences consistent examples of integrity, compassion, and excellence.

Thank you for choosing to partner with us. We look forward to building a strong, faith-filled community that uplifts our children and honors God in all things.

With gratitude and purpose,
Brandy Pendergrass-Lewis
Founder & Head of School
Christian Academy of Harlem

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” — Proverbs 22:6

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Mission, Vision & Core Values

Our Mission

The mission of the Christian Academy of Harlem is to cultivate confident, capable students grounded in biblical truth, academic excellence, strong character, and godly leadership. We strive to create a safe and uplifting environment where scholars grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and where staff exemplify the values of Christ in both word and deed.

Our Vision

Christian Academy of Harlem seeks to raise a generation of scholars who love God, walk in integrity, pursue excellence, and impact their communities with wisdom, compassion, and leadership. We envision a school where every child discovers their God-given purpose and is equipped to live boldly, faithfully, and successfully in an ever-changing world.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Christian Academy of Harlem admits students of all races, ethnicities, national origins, and backgrounds and does not discriminate in the administration of educational policies, admissions, scholarship programs, athletics, or school-administered activities.

Our Core Values

Faith: We honor God in all things and encourage students to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

Excellence: We pursue high academic standards, strong instruction, and quality work in everything we do.

Integrity: We act with honesty, responsibility, and consistency—both inside and outside the classroom.

Respect: We treat every person with dignity, kindness, and compassion as image-bearers of God.

Leadership: We teach scholars to lead themselves well and to influence others positively through their words and actions.

Character & Discipline: We promote self-control, wise decision-making, accountability, and personal growth.

Partnership: We value strong collaboration between school, family, and community. Parents are essential partners in student success.

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Safety: We commit to maintaining a safe, structured, and nurturing environment where every scholar feels protected and supported.

Section 1: Welcome to Christian Academy of Harlem

Christian Academy of Harlem welcomes all families to a school community rooted in biblical truth, academic excellence, and Christ-like character. We believe that families and educators work in partnership to nurture each scholar spiritually, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Together, we create an environment where children are safe, valued, and empowered to grow in purpose and leadership.

At CAH, we honor the sacred responsibility of educating children. We view each scholar as uniquely created by God, deserving of respect, patience, structure, and encouragement. Our school culture is designed to reflect the principles of kindness, integrity, self-discipline, and faith—in the classroom, in the community, and at home.

CAH operates as a Christ-centered, academically rigorous private school committed to whole-child development. Our model emphasizes a biblical foundation, excellence in academics, strong character development, partnership with families, and a safe and structured environment. Christian Academy of Harlem is a private Christian educational institution. The school reserves the right to establish and enforce policies, expectations, disciplinary standards, and educational practices consistent with its religious mission, values, and private school status.

Section 2: Family–School Partnership Expectations

Christian Academy of Harlem believes that education is a partnership between home and school. A scholar's success increases when parents, guardians, and school staff work together with shared expectations, clear communication, and mutual respect.

Parents and guardians agree to support the mission and Christian values of CAH, ensure students arrive on time and in full uniform, monitor academic progress, uphold behavior expectations, communicate respectfully, follow the communication chain, respect school policies, and notify the school promptly of changes in contact, custody, or health information.

CAH commits to providing high-quality Christ-centered instruction, maintaining a safe, structured, and loving environment, treating all students and families with dignity and respect, communicating clearly and consistently, supporting each student's growth, and partnering with families by listening and collaborating.

Together, families and the school agree to work as a united team for the benefit of every scholar, model respectful, Christ-like communication, address concerns promptly and

appropriately, maintain confidentiality where needed, and support the policies outlined in all CAH handbooks.

Section 3: Communication & Contacting the School

Effective communication is essential to the partnership between Christian Academy of Harlem and our families. We ask that all communication reflect professionalism, respect, and Christ-like character. CAH communicates through email, printed notices, phone calls, parent meetings, and official school platforms. Parents should first:

- Use email to contact teachers
- Teachers will respond within 24–48 hours
- Teachers cannot respond during instructional time
- Urgent matters must go through the main office

Parents follow the communication chain of respect: first the classroom teacher, then the assistant principal or program lead, then the Head of School for major concerns or unresolved issues. Parents must communicate respectfully with staff at all times.

- Yelling
- Threats
- Profanity
- Confrontational behavior
- Recording staff without permission is not permitted.

Such behavior may result in restricted communication channels or loss of on-campus privileges. Teachers and staff respond to communication within reasonable school-day timeframes. Evenings, weekends, and holidays are not considered business hours.

Section 4: Attendance, Absences & Tardy Policies

Regular attendance is essential to academic achievement, social development, and spiritual growth. Christian Academy of Harlem expects all scholars to attend school consistently and arrive on time each day. Official school hours are as follows:

- Breakfast Program: 7:30–8:00 AM
- Transition to Classrooms: 8:00–8:10 AM
- Unpack & Prepare: 8:10–8:20 AM
- Morning Devotion & Reflection: 8:20–8:45 AM
- Prayer & Announcements: 8:45–9:00 AM
- Instruction Begins: 9:00 AM sharp.
- Lunch and recess occur on a rotating schedule between 12:00 PM–2:00 PM depending on grade level.

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- Dismissal occurs from 3:50–4:00 PM
- After-School Program runs from 4:00–6:00 PM
- Required homework hour from 4:00–5:00 PM
- Clubs, After-School activities 5:00-5:50 PM followed by Pick-Up at 6PM.

Absences may be excused for illness, injury, medical appointments, religious observances, funerals, or pre-approved family circumstances. Unexcused absences include oversleeping, unapproved vacations, nonessential reasons, and transportation issues. Repeated unexcused absences lead to parent meetings and possible intervention plans.

A student is considered tardy if arriving after 9:00 AM. Students arriving after 9:15 AM must be signed in by a parent or guardian.

Early dismissals must be limited to emergencies or medical appointments and requested before 2:30 PM whenever possible. Only approved adults with photo ID may sign a child out. Extended absences of three or more days require communication with the school and, when applicable, medical documentation. Students are responsible for making up work from excused absences.

Section 5: Uniform & Appearance Expectations

Christian Academy of Harlem maintains a structured, modest, and Christ-centered learning environment. Our uniform reflects unity, excellence, and respect for God, the school, and oneself. All students must follow the CAH uniform daily unless specified by administration.

Girls (K–8) wear:

- A white uniform button-up shirt (short or long sleeve)
- A CAH cardigan, vest, or blazer
- Black uniform pants or a plaid CAH uniform skirt, skort, or jumper that is knee-length or longer
- A plaid CAH criss-cross tie
- Black closed-toe dress shoes
- Black or white stockings or knee-high socks
- A CAH uniform headband or hair tie is optional

Uniform style will depend on grade level. Please see the uniform guide for your scholars' correct uniform.

Boys (K–8) wear:

- A white uniform button-up shirt (short or long sleeve)
- A CAH vest, quarter-zip, or blazer
- Black uniform pants; a plaid CAH clip-on banded necktie
- A solid black belt; and black closed-toe dress shoes only

Uniform style will depend on grade level. Please see the uniform guide for your scholars' correct uniform.

All grades K–8 are required to wear the appropriate plaid CAH tie. Eighth grade students may wear approved Senior Apparel on designated days, including:

Senior Apparel options:

- CAH Senior Varsity Jackets
- Senior T-shirts
- Senior Sweatshirts
- Senior Hoodies
- Along with regular uniform bottoms, black shoes, and required ties.

Hair must be clean, neat, and well-groomed. Protective styles and natural hair colors are allowed. Modest uniform hair accessories are permitted. Hairstyles that obstruct learning or rely on large decorative pieces are not allowed.

Inside the building, students may only wear CAH cardigans, vests, blazers, or quarter-zips. Heavy coats, jackets, hoodies, and non-uniform sweaters must be removed indoors. Black closed-toe dress shoes are required; sneakers are allowed only on gym days. Boots may be worn in severe weather if they are black and approved by administration but should be changed when conditions allow.

On gym days, students wear the official CAH gym sweatsuit:

- CAH gym sweatpants
- CAH gym sweatshirt
- Sneakers
- A CAH gym T-shirt is optional

No jewelry is worn during physical activity. Spirit and casual Fridays require modest, school-appropriate clothing with:

- No tight or revealing items
- Leggings worn alone
- Ripped jeans

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- Inappropriate graphics
- Political graphics or wording

Non-compliance with the uniform policy results in parent contact, possible temporary loaner items, and, if repeated, a meeting with administration and potential loss of privileges.

Section 6: Behavior Expectations, Discipline & Christian Conduct

Christian Academy of Harlem is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and Christ-centered environment where all scholars can learn and grow. Behavior expectations are designed to teach discipline, build character, and guide students toward choices that reflect biblical values.

Students are expected to demonstrate respect, practice responsibility, show self-control, exhibit Christian character, and maintain a safe environment. This includes speaking kindly, caring for property, completing assignments, managing emotions appropriately, and avoiding physical aggression.

Prohibited behaviors include:

- Bullying
- Disrespect toward staff or peers
- Fighting
- Threats
- Intimidation
- Disruptions
- Lying
- Cheating
- Stealing
- Profanity
- Rough play
- Defacing property
- Possession of dangerous items.

Discipline at CAH balances clear consequences with restorative conversations, reflection, and partnership with families. Consequences may include redirection, reflection breaks, loss of privileges, parent contact, restorative conversations, reflection sheets, detention for upper grades, removal from class, parent meetings, or suspension for serious infractions.

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Bullying of any kind—physical, verbal, social, or digital—is not tolerated. Serious bullying behaviors result in immediate parent notification, written incident reports, intervention plans, and potential suspension. Students are taught to take responsibility, express feelings appropriately, listen respectfully, work through conflict, make things right, and practice forgiveness. Parents are expected to support school expectations and respond promptly when discipline concerns arise.

Section 7: Technology, Devices & Digital Behavior

Christian Academy of Harlem uses technology to enhance learning while teaching students to be responsible, safe, and disciplined digital citizens. All technology use must reflect Christian character and support academic success.

School devices such as Chromebooks and tablets must be handled carefully, used only for school-related tasks, and kept away from food and drinks. Attempts to bypass internet filters or security settings are prohibited and may result in loss of privileges and fees for damage.

Internet use must be responsible:

- Students may not access inappropriate or non-academic websites
- Use social media during school
- Watch unauthorized videos
- Share personal information online.

All online activity at school is monitored.

Christian Academy of Harlem understands the importance of parent–child communication. Students may use their personal cell phones during lunch and at dismissal to contact their parents. At all other times, phones must remain off and stored away. If a student needs to contact home outside of lunch or dismissal, they must use the main office phone.

Personal devices may not be used for social media, texting friends, gaming, or recording during the school day. Smartwatches must be set to school mode. If a device becomes a distraction, it may be confiscated for the day; repeated issues require parent pickup and may lead to the device being required to stay at home for the remainder of the quarter. Parents are asked not to call or text children during instructional hours and to respect school communication channels.

Section 8: Health, Illness, Medication & Safety Procedures

The health and safety of every scholar at Christian Academy of Harlem is a top priority. Students must remain home if they have a fever of 100.4°F or higher, vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours, severe cough, contagious infections, head lice, unknown rashes, or any illness preventing full participation in school.

If a student becomes ill during the day, they will be evaluated by designated health staff and parents will be contacted. Sick students must be picked up within one hour of notification. Students may return when symptoms improve and they are fever-free for 24 hours without medication, or when cleared by a doctor.

All medications given at school require a completed Medication Administration Form with doctor and parent signatures. Medication must be delivered by an adult in its original labeled container and may not be sent in backpacks. Students may not self-administer medication except in approved cases such as inhalers or EpiPens with documented authorization.

Parents must report all allergies using the appropriate forms. Severe allergies require an Action Plan and necessary medications on site. Food-sharing is limited to protect students, and shellfish/seafood is not allowed. Minor injuries are treated with basic first aid and parents are notified when appropriate; serious injuries or emergencies may result in 911 being called.

The school conducts regular safety drills, including fire and lockdown drills, and communicates weather-related closures or delays through official channels. Parents must ensure health documentation such as immunizations, physical forms, emergency contacts, and allergy forms remain current.

Section 9: Attendance at Events, Field Trips & Transportation

Christian Academy of Harlem provides enriching learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Students and families are expected to support school events such as chapel services, award ceremonies, concerts, parent nights, and special celebrations. Students should wear proper uniforms unless otherwise directed and demonstrate respectful behavior at all times.

Field trips are an extension of classroom learning and a privilege. Students must return signed permission forms, follow safety rules, stay with their assigned group, and follow staff and chaperone instructions immediately. CAH uses contracted transportation for field trips and special events such as concerts and performances.

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Students riding buses must remain seated, use quiet voices, wear seatbelts when available, and follow all safety expectations. Chaperones must complete required processes, follow staff directions, give full attention to assigned students, refrain from using phones except in emergencies, and model positive Christian behavior.

A student may be excluded from a trip or special event if their behavior has been unsafe, if discipline issues are unresolved, or if required forms and fees are not submitted. Parents must ensure punctual arrival and pickup for trips that begin or end outside normal school hours.

Section 10: Food, Celebrations, Birthdays & Allergy-Safe Practices

Christian Academy of Harlem prioritizes student safety, joy, and community while maintaining a Christ-centered and allergy-aware environment. Parents must list all allergies on emergency and allergy forms and inform teachers in advance when sending food items.

Shellfish and seafood are not permitted. Home-baked items are allowed for birthdays, holiday events, and classroom celebrations as long as teachers are informed of ingredients and potential allergens such as nuts, dairy, or gluten. Students may receive treats from celebrations but should not share or swap lunches without permission.

Classroom celebrations for Christian holidays, cultural observances, academic milestones, and spirit events may include games, music, decorations, and food, as long as everything remains family-friendly, modest, and aligned with Christian values. Themes, decorations, music, imagery, or characters associated with horror, occult practices, frightening content, or inappropriate violence are not permitted at Christian Academy of Harlem.

Birthdays may be celebrated during a small window at the end of the day as scheduled by the teacher. Allowed items include pizza parties, store-bought or home-baked treats, candy bags, goodie bags, party hats, appropriate decorations, and simple games. Inappropriate themes, music, or imagery are not allowed.

For schoolwide events, parents may contribute food with prior approval and clear labeling of ingredients. Fasting for religious reasons will be respected when families notify the school. Parents are expected to follow all allergy and celebration guidelines, plan in advance with teachers, and keep celebrations clean, respectful, and Christ-centered.

Section 11: Visitors, Volunteering, Communication Boundaries & Building Safety

Christian Academy of Harlem prioritizes student safety, staff protection, and a structured learning environment. All visitors enter through the main entrance, sign in, and may be

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asked to show ID. Visitor badges must be worn and visitors must remain only in approved areas.

Parents may not enter classrooms without permission, wander hallways, or interrupt instruction. Teacher meetings must be scheduled and cannot take place during drop-off, pick-up, or class time.

Volunteers must complete required forms or screenings, follow all school rules, maintain confidentiality, avoid disciplining students, and refrain from bringing other children while volunteering. Use of phones is limited to emergencies and taking photos of students is not allowed without permission.

Parents must not text teachers' personal phones, contact them on social media, or confront them publicly. Communication should occur through email, scheduled meetings, or the main office. Disrespectful or aggressive behavior, including yelling, threats, profanity, or recording staff without consent, may result in restricted access to the building.

Doors remain locked during the school day, staff monitor hallways, and safety procedures are practiced consistently. Students are released only to approved adults with ID, and custody changes must be documented by families.

Section 12: Homework, Academic Expectations & After-School Policies

Christian Academy of Harlem maintains high academic standards rooted in discipline, responsibility, and excellence. Homework reinforces classroom learning, builds independence, and prepares students for future rigor.

Students are responsible for completing assignments, doing their best work, returning homework on time, and bringing necessary materials. Parents provide a quiet space, encourage effort rather than perfection, check folders nightly, and communicate concerns to teachers.

Repeated missing work results in communication with families, reflection activities, potential loss of privileges, and academic support interventions. CAH uses assessments, classwork, participation, and projects to evaluate progress and keeps parents informed.

The After-School Program runs from 4:00–6:00 PM. From 4:00–5:00 PM, all participants engage in a mandatory homework hour in a quiet, structured setting. From 5:00–5:50 PM, students may participate in enrichment activities such as art, clubs, ballet, music, karate, chess, and other enrichment activities determined by the school. All students must be picked up by 6:00 PM.

Parents sign students out from after-school and may pick them up at any time, understanding that early pickup may interrupt homework. Students who are repeatedly disruptive during after-school may lose access to certain activities or, if necessary, the program itself.

Section 13: Parent Responsibilities, School–Home Partnership & Code of Conduct

Christian Academy of Harlem believes education is a partnership between the school, the student, and the family. When parents and staff work together with mutual respect and communication, scholars thrive academically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Parents support learning by ensuring students:

- Arrive on time
- Check folders regularly
- Review homework assignments
- Encourage daily reading
- Affirm positive effort and growth

They support school structure by following policies, upholding Christian values, reinforcing discipline, ensuring uniforms are worn correctly, and respecting routines.

Parents support communication by checking email and notices regularly, scheduling meetings appropriately, responding to messages, and speaking respectfully with staff. Parents must not yell, threaten, use profanity, confront staff in public spaces, record them without permission, or attempt to discipline other children. Such behaviors may lead to restricted access to the school.

CAH commits to providing a safe, nurturing environment, high-quality instruction, regular communication, and respectful handling of concerns. Parents commit to supporting school policies, engaging in their child’s learning, and modeling Christ-like behavior. Concerns are addressed through the communication chain of teacher, then Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Principal, then Head of School, always with respect and calmness.

Section 14: Tuition, Fees & Financial Policies

Christian Academy of Harlem is a private Christian school. Tuition enables the school to maintain a safe, structured, academically excellent, and Christ-centered environment. Families are expected to honor all financial obligations.

Parents agree to pay tuition according to the selected payment schedule, keep accounts in good standing, communicate promptly about financial concerns, and submit required forms for scholarships or aid when applicable.

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Payment plans may include annual, semester, or monthly options, and payments must be made on or before due dates. Late or missed payments may result in reminders, late fees, meetings with administration, and, if unaddressed, restrictions on participation in programs or re-enrollment.

Returned payments may incur fees and require future payments to be made with certified funds. Refunds are generally not issued for absences, mid-year withdrawal, weather closures, or behavior-related suspensions and follow the school's formal refund policy.

Parents may also be responsible for fees related to uniforms, after-school, field trips, lost or damaged books, technology, senior activities, testing, or replacement ID badges. Tuition balances are communicated confidentially through email, portals, and written notices. Financial records are kept private and are accessible only to authorized staff.

Section 15: Emergency Procedures, Dismissal Rules & School Safety Protocols

The safety and protection of every scholar is a core commitment of Christian Academy of Harlem. Parents must provide accurate emergency contacts, address information, approved pickup lists, and custody documentation when applicable, and update these promptly when changes occur.

CAH conducts regular fire drills, lockdown or secure drills, and evacuation procedures. Students are taught to remain calm, follow directions, and stay with their class. Staff are trained in safety protocols and work closely with local guidelines for private schools.

In a medical emergency, staff provide first aid and contact emergency services if necessary. Parents are notified as soon as possible, and emergency contacts are used if parents cannot be reached. Weather-related closures or early dismissals are communicated through email, school messages, and other official channels.

During the school day, doors remain locked, visitors sign in, and students are never released from the building without office approval. Dismissal occurs under supervision; only approved adults with ID may pick up children. Early dismissals should be requested before 2:30 PM.

During emergencies, parents are expected to remain calm, follow directions from school staff, avoid blocking entrances or phone lines, and pick up promptly when notified. The safety of all students and staff is always the highest priority.

Section 16: Acknowledgment, Signatures & Handbook Agreement

By enrolling a child at Christian Academy of Harlem, families agree to partner with the school in upholding its mission, values, and policies.

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All parents/guardians must read the Parent & Family Handbook and sign the acknowledgment form below. This signature confirms understanding and agreement to support the school—not perfection, but partnership.

CAH PARENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

School Year: 2027–2028

As the parent/guardian of the above student, I acknowledge the following:

- I have received and reviewed the **Christian Academy of Harlem Parent & Family Handbook**.
- I understand the policies, expectations, and procedures described within it.
- I agree to support my child in following CAH rules, routines, and **Christian values**.
- I will ensure my child arrives **on time**, in **full uniform**, and prepared for learning each day.
- I will communicate **respectfully** with teachers, staff, and administration, and follow the communication boundaries set by CAH.
- I understand the school's expectations for **behavior, discipline, technology, uniforms, celebrations, attendance, and academic standards**.
- I understand that CAH may update policies if necessary and that I will be informed of any major changes.

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Handbook Changes & Updates

Christian Academy of Harlem reserves the right to revise, update, modify, or clarify handbook policies and procedures at any time when necessary for the operation, safety, and mission of the school.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

SCHOOL CONFIRMATION (FOR OFFICE USE)

Administrator Name: _____

Position: _____

Administrator Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Christian Academy of Harlem reserves the right to interpret, revise, update, modify, supplement, rescind, or depart from the policies, procedures, and guidelines outlined in this handbook at its discretion, with or without notice, when necessary for the operation, safety, mission, or well-being of the school community.

