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Reference: AL

Dear Parent/Carer

Important Information Regarding School Attendance

The link between good GCSE results and excellent school attendance is clear. In England in 2014, 78% of students with no school absences achieved 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths. This fell to 69% for those with 0-5 absences and only 52% for those with 5-10 absences. Only 25% of students with 15-20 absences achieved 5+ GCSEs.

Whenever we look at students who are failing to achieve their potential there is almost always a link with poor attendance. Once students have fallen behind, catching up can be very difficult (sometimes impossible), and absence in the later years of education always affects exam results and can cause problems with references for colleges, universities, employers etc.

Additionally, students who are frequently absent from school can struggle to maintain friendships and re-integrate into friendship groups on their return to school.

There is a general feeling that 90%+ is good enough; but with school attendance 95% is only just average. It therefore follows that EVERY DAY MATTERS!

The school target for attendance is 96% or better. This allows for 7.5 days' absence to account for the usual childhood illnesses or medical appointments. **As a guide, the Education Welfare Service advises that if a parent/carer is able to go to work with the same condition as a student, the student should be able to attend school.** We do not operate a 48-hour rule, but ask that students returning to school following sickness observe good hygiene rules as an adult would in the workplace. We are keen to support all our students to achieve their best and this must include ensuring that they attend school as often as possible. We will do the following to support students' attendance:

- Write to you if attendance falls below 95% or if we are concerned about a pattern of absences.
- Invite you into school to discuss any concerns/worries with the Family Support and Attendance Officer or Progress Leader if attendance continues to fall.
- Refer the student to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service if attendance falls to 90%.
- Please contact the Pastoral Team, the Family Support and Attendance Officer or Progress Leader if you feel your child is well enough to be in school, but not well enough to go to all their lessons. We may be able to make special arrangements.
- If you believe your child is well enough to be in school, or is refusing, it is essential that you talk to the Family Support and Attendance Officer. We can offer a variety of options to support you getting your child back into school.

- If required, medicines can be brought to school, including those needing refrigeration, and stored in the Medical Room. A note should accompany any medication, stating that school has permission to administer it along with the times, dose and when this should happen.

What you can do to support your child:

- Never grant days off for birthdays, shopping trips or any other reason other than illness.
- Lessons begin at 08.40 prompt. We ask that all students arrive at 08.30 to avoid them starting their first lesson late. Students who are 'dropped off' at 08.40 on a daily basis will be late to their lesson and therefore late for the start of school.
- Please leave a message on each day of absence on the absence line. It is for school to decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised. **Stating 'Unwell' or 'Poorly' gives insufficient information for us to make that decision, and the absence could be unauthorised.**
- Please phone daily unless you have made alternative arrangements with school. We do not know if you have sent your child to school and need to know this in order to keep them safe. If we do not hear from you we will endeavour to contact you, but we must have at least two up-to-date emergency contact numbers on record to be able to do this.
- Last/First day of term, non-uniform Days or 'Off-Timetable' days are full curriculum days with content that is required by the national curriculum. It is unacceptable and against the law to keep students off on such days for any reason other than illness that renders a student too ill to attend. Any absence on days such as these could be unauthorised unless medical evidence is received, or prior agreement has been reached with school.
- We have adopted a pragmatic approach towards the authorisation of *Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances* where other schools have imposed blanket bans. Mrs Pearson considers every case personally and may ask for additional information such as a letter from employers confirming inability to take holiday during the school holidays. Taking *Leave of Absence* in term time without authorisation is against the law, and telephoning in daily stating a student is unwell causes a breakdown in trust between home and school.

We understand that the majority of parents/carers support us fully in terms of ensuring their children attend school regularly and that you may have received this message on more than one occasion. However, we share this letter with all as it is important that we all understand the responsibilities school has to uphold to avoid any misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely



A Pearson
Associate Headteacher