

The Marches School
part of the Marches Academy Trust
Morda Road, Oswestry
Shropshire SY11 2AR

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Headteacher: Alison Pearson BSc, MA, NPQH

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Reference: AL/ap

Dear Parent/Carer,

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.
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 illness' or medical appointments. **As a guide, the Education Welfare Service advises that if a parent would go to work with the same condition, then the student should be in 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 96%, 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 Key Stage Leader if attendance continues to fall.
- Refer the student to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service if attendance continues to fall.
- Please contact your child's Head of Academic Progress or the Attendance Officer 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 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 Student Support. A note should accompany any medication, stating that the school has permission to administer it, along with the times that this should happen.



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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 8.40am prompt. We ask that all students arrive at 8.30am to avoid them starting their first lesson late. Students who are 'dropped off' at 8.40am 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. It is for the 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 contact you, but we must have at least two up-to-date emergency contact numbers on record to be able to do this.
- First/Last 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 phoning in daily stating a student is unwell causes a breakdown in trust between home and school.

We understand that the majority of parents and 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 parents and carers as it is important that we all understand the responsibilities school has to uphold to avoid any misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A Lowe
Family Support and Attendance Officer

