

26 February 2024

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am writing regarding school absence levels and the national (and local) crisis that schools are facing since the pandemic. Nationally, there is a concerning trend of rising absence levels. This trend is also being experienced at our academy. On average, 11.5% of our students are absent from school each day. 12.5% of Year 11 students - those in the most important examination year of their lives – are also absent.

Pre-pandemic, schools were regularly seeing attendance levels at 95%, with Year 11 often at 97% or higher, giving them the best chance of success. We've become used to these lowered statistics and, sadly, such absence levels are becoming all too common. Schools around the country are facing similar attendance issues.

With this in mind, I start by saying a heartfelt thank you to all of you who ensure that your child is here every day, or attends as regularly as they are able to. I appreciate that there may be times when your child may not be able to attend school due to illness or challenging medical/personal circumstances, and I know that in such cases many of you are doing everything possible to get your child back to school.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 112 students who have 100% attendance for the academic year so far, and the 494 students who have 95%+ attendance. Congratulations on this fantastic achievement!

There are, however, many of our students who are missing school for reasons which may be deemed 'avoidable'. Missing two weeks for a family holiday in term time will mean that your child misses 50 hours of learning. Having 'broken attendance' (regular single days off) will mean that your child misses five hours of learning each time. This will lead to gaps in learning and is likely to have a negative impact on your child's understanding of topics in a range of subjects as lessons are taught sequentially which rely and build upon prior knowledge.

I have previously highlighted the correlation between attendance and exam results. Put simply – students who attend our school regularly achieve well, and those who don't, find it significantly more challenging to do so. Whilst exam results are not the be-all and end-all, it is a fact that they can 'open more doors' for your child once they leave school. In addition, regular absence means that students are likely to develop poor habits to take into the workplace such as high levels of absence and poor punctuality.

As highlighted in a previous letter, the Government has recognised the serious nature of the country's attendance trends by recently releasing their "moments matter, attendance counts" initiative. Furthermore, the lost learning and social interaction that our children suffered during the pandemic led Wakefield council to state "it is more important than ever to ensure all children and young people attend school".

The solution is to ensure that your child attends school regularly. Our amazing attendance team are here to support you in achieving this. Please can I ask that if your child is absent from school regularly that you work with our attendance team to see if there is anything that we can do to support you and your child.

Thank you once again for your continued support and commitment to ensuring that your child attends school.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Allington', written in a cursive style.

Mr L. Allington
Assistant Principal