

21 January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you with an update on our school's attendance figures. It brings me a sense of pride to inform you that our school's current attendance rates, despite the challenges posed by the post-pandemic environment, are above both regional and national averages. However, it is important to acknowledge that we are still striving to reach the exemplary levels of attendance we experienced prior to the pandemic.

In the second week of this term, our overall student absence was at 7.56%, with 7.52% in our Year 11 cohort. These figures, while better than many other schools, still fall short of our pre-pandemic rates where overall attendance was consistently around 96%, and even higher for Year 11. The importance of high attendance rates cannot be overstated, especially considering the critical academic phase our Year 11 students are currently navigating.

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you who have been ensuring your child's regular attendance. Your efforts have significantly contributed to our school's position above the regional and national averages. However, there remains a small percentage of our student population that is not attending as regularly as we would hope.

The impact of absenteeism, even if it seems minor, can be far-reaching. A two-week family holiday during term time, for instance, results in a loss of over 50 hours of learning and parental fines. Such absences not only create gaps in learning but can also adversely affect examination outcomes. The structure of our curriculum is sequential, relying on the foundation of previous lessons. Therefore, even sporadic absences can disrupt a student's understanding and progression.

Our school recognises the vital link between regular attendance and academic success. Consistent school attendance is instrumental not just for immediate academic results, but it also lays the groundwork for future career prospects and earning potential. Moreover, regular attendance fosters positive learning and work habits, essential for future success in the workplace.

To address this, our school is actively involved in the government's national campaign to highlight the importance of school attendance. Our dedicated attendance team is ever-ready to support our students and families in achieving and maintaining regular attendance. This is particularly crucial for our Year 11 students, given the immediate implications on their academic and future career trajectories.

To further support our campaign for improved attendance, we are implementing several initiatives:

- **National Warm Welcome:** We are sharing resources from the attendance campaign to foster a welcoming environment for families this spring. These resources, adaptable to our school's context, will be shared via Twitter/X <https://twitter.com/OGAcademy>, and on our website, <https://grange.outwood.com>.
- **Support First Approach:** For students struggling with attendance, we are adopting a supportive stance. A range of [webinars](#) and [case studies](#), offering best practices and tips to overcome attendance barriers, are at your disposal.
- **Effective Communication Toolkit:** We encourage you to familiarise yourselves with our [toolkit](#) designed to aid communication with families about attendance, thus enhancing our collective impact.
- **Setting Clear Expectations:** We expect parents and carers to support good attendance by notifying us of absences due to illness and having contingency plans for missed school transport. In return, we commit to proactive communication regarding your child's attendance and arranging necessary meetings to address concerns.
- **Health Guidance Awareness:** We remind you of the NHS [guidelines](#) on school attendance during mild illnesses and the [advice](#) from the Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, highlighting the long-term impact of prolonged absenteeism on a child's anxiety and school engagement.
- **Infection Control Measures:** Our school continues to emphasise the importance of regular handwashing and effective ventilation in classrooms. We are utilising CO2 monitors to ensure optimal ventilation and are transparent about our measures to control infection spread, offering reassurance to parents and carers.
- **Individual Support:** If your child is facing regular absenteeism, we encourage you to engage with our attendance team for tailored support to facilitate consistent school attendance.

In conclusion, while we celebrate our current position above regional and national attendance averages, our goal remains to return to, and even surpass, our pre-pandemic attendance levels. Your continued support and collaboration in this endeavour are invaluable. Together, we can ensure that our students not only meet but exceed their potential. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to your child's education and well-being.

Yours faithfully

L Woods
Vice Principal
Outwood Grange Academy