

July 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Important information regarding changes to our Attendance Policy from September 2015

The Department for Education have announced that the threshold for Persistent Absence has changed. From September 2015, a child whose attendance is 90% or below will now be classified as 'Persistently Absent' from school. This has changed from 85% previously. During the Academic year 2014/2015, just over 10% of students at Outwood Grange Academy fell into this category. Absence at this level means a child will have missed around 4 weeks of school – equivalent to 100 missed lessons throughout the year. Persistent absence levels will continue to be taken into account during Ofsted inspections.

The Academy must respond to this change in order to ensure that students' attainment is not negatively affected by low attendance to lessons. Firstly, we have increased the Academy attendance target from 95% to 96%. We have exceeded our 95% target for the last two years and it makes sense to continue to drive up standards. Secondly, from September 2015, we will contact parents/carers regarding their child's absence at an earlier stage than before. Our concerns will be raised after the following number of days' absence:

By when:	Number of days absence
by the beginning of October	students with 3 days absence or more
by mid-November	students with 3 days absence or more
by the beginning of January	students with 5 days absence or more
by mid-February	students with 6 days absence or more
after the Easter holidays	students with 8 days absence or more
by mid-May	students with 10 days absence or more
by the end of June	students with 12 days absence or more

If your child has had less than 90% attendance this academic year we will write to you personally to inform you of this in an effort to offer our support so that your son/daughter will hopefully be in a position to attend more regularly from September 2015. As always, we wish to work with parents/carers to improve life chances for all of our students.

We intend to continue to celebrate our improvements and would like to share with you that the Academy's overall attendance has improved by 0.28% on the previous year (equivalent to a total of 3870 additional lessons attended by our students). End of year certificates were presented to 72% of our students who achieved 95% attendance and above. A total of 220 students received a pair of tickets to Laser Zone for having 100% attendance this academic year.

Medical/Dental and Other Appointments during Academy time

There has been an increase in the number of students missing lessons to attend routine appointments. In total, around 4207 lessons were missed which is equivalent to 0.26% absence across the whole Academy this academic year. In order to reduce the number of missed lessons, we request that from

September 2015, *all* routine appointments be arranged outside of school time. There is ample time after school finishes at 2.30pm or during school holidays for this to be arranged. In exceptional circumstances where an urgent appointment is required, or for hospital clinic appointments that operate during the day *only*, we require sight of an appointment card or letter in order to authorise any absence from school. This should be presented to SID or the Attendance Office as usual, preferably in advance of the appointment.

Leave of Absence during term time

Absence for family holidays continues to be an issue in our efforts to reduce the number of lessons missed by students. During the academic year 2014/2015, a total of 4010 lessons were missed by students who were taken out of the Academy by their parents/carers for family holidays, equivalent to 0.25% absence across the whole Academy. As you are aware, Fixed Penalty Notices (or fines) of £60 per parent, per child, are being issued to those parents/carers who continue to take their children out of school for holidays. It is important to note that a two-week absence means a child can only achieve a maximum of 95% attendance during an academic year and puts them in a position of having to catch up on 50 missed lessons in order to keep up with their peers. Additionally, we would urge parents/carers not to invent their child's illness in order to take them out of school on holiday. This creates extra work for Academy staff but more importantly, puts children in a very difficult position, encouraging them to hide where they have been and even lie to their teachers regarding their absence. We find out about the real reason for absence in the majority of cases and would urge parents to avoid embarrassment by making any application for leave in the usual way.

As always, if you have any queries regarding the attendance of your child, please contact the Attendance Office.

Yours faithfully



Mrs Janet Levitt
Director of Attendance and Student Welfare