

September 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even one day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At Witchford Village College our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our students receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

Expected attendance at WVC is 100% and regular attendance is a minimum of 96%; akin to attending 182 of the possible 190 days this year. This would mean having no more than 8 days of absence between now and the end of the academic year in July. A lower attendance impacts outcomes; attend less and you will achieve less.

Attendance information, like exam certificates, travel with your child once they leave Witchford Village College to Further Education, employment or training. It is also an area where statutory Local Authority involvement can be instigated if regular attendance is not maintained and so is very important and must be taken very seriously.

It is important for you as parents to understand the process as this is critical in us working together. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and we expect every child to attend everyday unless there is a very good reason for their non-attendance. If your child is not at the College, this counts as an absence and will affect their attendance percentage and this includes all medical appointments. Cambridgeshire County Council advise that in an academic year a child should have no more than one to two broken weeks which occurs every time a student is absent and misses a day or part day of lessons. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and trigger our attendance monitoring process.

Whilst we understand that, sometimes, there are very legitimate reasons for your child not attending the College, we ask that you support us and work with us to ensure regular attendance occurs.

Please note the three areas below: Reporting, Actions and Support.

Reporting:

You must ring the absence line (01353 646416) or use Edulink to report the absence and attach any relevant evidence to enable us to authorise it, this needs to be done by 8.30am on each day of absence stating: name; form; reasons for absence including condition - for example 'migraine'. It is expected that any medical appointments will, wherever possible, be arranged for outside of College hours but where this is not possible, we expect students to attend for part of the day if the appointment is local. Evidence is required to authorise absences due to medical appointments – please forward copies of any medical appointment letters, cards or emails to the Attendance Officer.

Actions:

Attendance **above 98% is Outstanding**

Attendance above 94% Requires Improvement

Attendance above 96% is Good

Attendance **below 94% is Inadequate**

Attendance that requires improvement is reported in references and may trigger implementation of a staged letter process leading to a fine or prosecution in extreme cases. The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The Local Authority operates a system where the criteria for legal intervention is where students have: At least nine sessions (four and a half days) of unauthorised absence within a six week period where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time (for absences from 6/7 September 2021); or 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice or a Court hearing. Any student at Witchford Village College who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice for £60 per parent per child is issued; both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 within 28 days. Failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will be used as evidence by the Local Authority in any legal action taken.

Support:

Support is triggered in line with the Attendance Policy and includes: meetings with the Form Tutor, Head of Year, or Deputy Headteacher for discussions with the student and/or parent(s) or more formal meetings such as those within the "Fast Track to Attendance" process. These meetings allow College staff and parents to discuss measures that will support the student to attend more frequently.

Any absence from the College will impact on academic progress and therefore it is expected that the work will be completed outside of the normal Academy hours. For some students, this could be a formal arrangement of session 4, at the end of the normal College day, in subject-based intervention sessions.

It is our aim that all absence returns to a pattern of regular attendance as soon as possible and so we ask for your continued help and support in helping us to achieve this aim.

Yours Sincerely,



Mrs Rose Cornelius
Deputy Headteacher