

January 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

### RE: School Attendance and Punctuality

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you about our attendance procedures at The Holt School.

The Department for Education requires all schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence; including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

There is a direct link between good attendance and students achieving their very best; students who leave school, having fulfilled their academic potential have much more choice about what they want to do in the future. It is not only academic performance that suffers with poor attendance but socially students will find it more difficult to maintain friendships and feel part of the school community if they are not in school.

99%	2 days off per year
95%	1 day off, on average, per month
90%	1 day off, on average, per fortnight
85%	3 days off, on average, per month
80%	1 day off, on average, a week

Broken weeks of attendance are the most worrying, as this is where a student has the odd day off every week or every other week for vague illness such as 'feeling sick' or 'headache'. Parents and school have a responsibility to instil good habits from an early age so students are work-ready when they leave school.

In the case of those students with individual health needs, we aim to work closely with parents/guardians to establish an Attendance Action Plan for Health to support you and your child.

Should your daughter/son be too unwell to attend school:

- Please contact the attendance officer preferably by email [absence@holt.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:absence@holt.wokingham.sch.uk) Alternatively by phone on the attendance line or send a letter in to school with a clear reason as to the nature of your child's illness
- This needs to be done in the morning of each day of illness by 9am, unless agreed with the attendance officer or Head of Year following a conversation about the nature of the illness
- Vomiting or diarrhoea require 24 hours before return to school

If your child is feeling a bit unwell in the morning, we would ask that you encourage them to get up, have a shower and eat some breakfast, as they often feel better after this. Your child is allowed to have over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol, cough sweets, feminax and ibuprofen to self-administer if appropriate. Periods, headaches, a cold, a slight temperature and just 'feeling unwell' are not sufficient reasons to not attend school. We find that once students get in to school they feel much better or are distracted by what they are doing and soon forget their ailments. If during the day your child still feels unwell they should go to student support. A member of the student support team will talk to your child and will call you to discuss if you need to come and collect them.

The EWO has advised that it is for the school to decide whether absence is authorised or unauthorised. Therefore if a pattern of absence starts to occur and there is no medical evidence stating that your child is too unwell to attend school, then school may unauthorise absence.

If your child's Head of Year starts to become concerned about the level of absence, they will talk to your child and/or phone home to discuss the nature of the absence and see if there is anything school can do to support you and your child.

We have been advised by our EWO (Education Welfare Officer) that if a student has either less than 93% attendance or 3 broken weeks of attendance, you will receive a phone call from the Head of Year or a letter of concern from school. Should attendance not improve, you will be invited in to a supportive meeting to come up with an attendance plan and set targets for your child. Should attendance still not improve without any medical evidence that your child is not fit to attend school, you will be advised that a referral is being made to the EWO. Depending on their review you could be at risk of being issued with a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice).

If you wish to take your child out during school time please email the Co-Headteachers before the absence. Holidays are not authorised except in exceptional circumstances. If you should decide to take your child out of school for holiday, it will be an unauthorised absence. In line with Wokingham Borough Council policy, unauthorised absence may result in a Penalty Notice without further notice. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 per parent, per child; between 22 and 28 days it increases to £120. Failure to pay the fine will result in the matter being taken to Court.

We appreciate that many parents do their best to arrange medical and dental appointments out of school hours. If your child needs to be collected during the school day please send them in with a note to take to student support when it is time to sign out or email the year team with the date and approximate time. Medical appointments are authorised absence.

Your child should be in their form room when the bell goes at 8.40am ready for registration. Any student who is late will be issued with a Head of Year 10 minute late detention at the beginning of lunchtime. The registers close at 9.20am so any late arrival after that time is unauthorised absence. We use our discretion when school buses are late or if there are traffic delays due to unpredictable circumstances, beyond normal rush hour traffic and students would not then be issued with a detention.

We all have a responsibility to ensure children are accessing their education and we greatly appreciate your support in enabling us to do this. We always aim to work in a supportive way with you and your child if we have concerns about attendance or punctuality; however there are times when firmness is sometimes required, but it is always in the best interests of the child. We appreciate that the vast majority of our parents support good attendance.

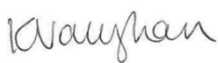
Finally, we have noticed that recently some students have called their parents in school to say they are ill and need collecting, rather than going to student support to report they are feeling unwell. We will remind students in assembly next week that they must go to student support, who will assess them and then contact parents if necessary. If you receive a call from your child to say they are ill, we do understand it can be alarming, but please ask them to go to student support first and a colleague from the student support team will call you, or you can call them shortly after the call from your child, to check the situation.

The full Attendance Policy is available on the school's website.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact your Head of Year or myself.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



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