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WORKINGTON ACADEMY

30th September 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Attendance Reminders, DfE changes and the Importance of Attendance at School

As I write to you today, as we approach the halfway mark of the first half term of the academic year, I would like to remind you of the importance of high attendance at school and ask for your support in ensuring that your child is in school, on time and ready to learn every day.

The **UK Government** and **Department for Education (DfE)** continue to hold attendance at school one of their highest priorities to improve, given the proven correlation between high attendance and high achievement and outcomes – every day and every lesson really do count to your child's progress and life chances.

You may have seen in the news recently that attendance at school remains a national concern, in particular worrying figures surrounding;

- Students who continue to be persistently absent (below 90% attendance)
- Holidays being taken in term time
- Attendance in school on Fridays

The DfE ask all schools to monitor the attendance of all students closely and to intervene and take action where necessary, in order to support national improvements in attendance.

Please be aware that the DfE have also recently announced national changes to penalty notices issued for poor attendance and unauthorised absence in term time. These changes came into effect on 19th August 2024 and all schools and Local Authorities have been directed to apply these.

Changes to be aware of include;

- Failing to ensure regular school attendance by taking your child out of school in term time for a holiday is an offence under section 444 (1) or section 444 (1A) of the 1996 Education act. The maximum penalty for these offences is a fine of £2,500, three months' imprisonment, or both.
- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent, per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 28 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in prosecution, except in limited circumstances.
- **The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes, sessions missed due to non-emergency appointments, holidays, sessions where no evidence has been provided for illness or where there has been no contact or where there is no genuine reason for the child to be absent from school.**
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution).

At Workington Academy, we take great pride in ensuring the high attendance of our students, to ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve the very best outcomes. Our well-planned and highly effective curriculum ensures that every lesson adds value and therefore missing just one lesson can have a detrimental impact on your child's progress. Every day of absence, including that on a Friday and the last day before a school holiday equates to 5 hours of valuable learning missed.

It is a proven fact that students with above 97% attendance over the course of an academic year are more likely to achieve better outcomes and in turn, life chances. Any students with below 97% attendance are in danger of not achieving their potential.

Over recent years we have had the best exam results in the school's history and this has been driven by excellent attendance and our effective curriculum.

We are aware that at this time of year, there are some illnesses around, meaning that some students may not be feeling 100%. However, we do ask that unless they are really too ill to come to school or told specifically by a Medical Professional not to attend, that attendance at school is prioritised. Our staff here at the academy will always take care of your child in school and can make adjustments for them, if they are not feeling their best. By being in school they will still access some learning, which is better than none at all.

As a reminder, it is essential that if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason that you make contact with us before 8.00am via our absence line. **You must make contact on every day of absence**.

Please note that where no contact or reason is communicated for absence, this will automatically be logged as unauthorised.

Please also note that all medical and dentist appointments **should not** be made during school hours unless it is an emergency. Absences for appointments will remain unauthorised until evidence is provided. Our usual attendance, contact and home visit procedures will continue to be applied.

Please find further information about our attendance procedures and term dates overleaf.

You can continue to track your child's attendance via the Edulink App.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Year Group Team or Miss Behan, our Attendance and Welfare Officer.

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Mark Bedford
Headteacher

WORKINGTON ACADEMY ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Illness and Contacting the Academy

All students should attend the academy every day unless they are genuinely unwell and unable to come to school. Where possible, we would always encourage you to send your child to school, even if they are not feeling 100%. Our staff here at the academy will always take care of your child in school and can make adjustments for them, if they are not feeling their best. By being in school they will still access some learning, which is better than none at all.

If this is not possible, please contact the absence line or email absence@workingtonacademy.org before 8.00am on the first day of absence and every day of absence thereafter.

Contact must be made on every day of absence. When contacting us about your child's absence please give specific details as to why they are unable to attend school. **Reasons given such as 'feeling unwell', 'poorly', 'sick' or 'ill' will not be accepted and recorded as unauthorised.**

Please do not be offended if further contact is made with you to discuss your child's absence and to support them in returning to school as soon as possible, even later that day. If students are absent for three or more days consecutively – medical evidence from a GP, pharmacy or medical professional should be provided. Please note that where no reason for absence is provided or where a child is absent for 3 or more days, without medical evidence provided, we may carry out a home visit / welfare check.

Medical / Dental Appointments

Non-emergency medical and dental appointments **must** be made outside of academy hours. If this is not possible, a copy of the appointment date, time and location must be provided. Please note that absence will only be authorised for the appointment time and travel time only. Without this evidence, the absence will be unauthorised. Pupils must be signed out at the main office by parents/carers.

Leave of Absence

It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time for any students. Leave of absence will only be approved in **exceptional circumstances**, at the discretion of Mr Bedford. For any leave of absence to be considered, applications to Mr Bedford must be made at least two weeks in advance, using the online or downloadable form found on our website and also available from our school office. Where authorisation is not granted, subsequent term time holiday absence will be reported as a matter of course to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the Headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount £160, per parent, per child. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in prosecution except in limited circumstances.

Students classed as Persistently Absent

The DfE class any student with an attendance figure of below 90% as being persistently absent. If your child falls into this category, without an authorised reason or medical evidence provided, intervention may be applied by either the school or Local Authority Welfare Service.

Lateness

The academy day begins promptly at 8.35am, with Tutor time / morning assemblies. Students should be on site from 8.30am. Essential information, notices, topics and activities are covered both in morning Tutor time and assemblies, and it is crucial that students do not miss and are not late for these sessions.

Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, this will be recorded as an authorised absence, but where explanations are inadequate – an absence (late) will be recorded and sanctions will be applied.

You will be notified every day that you child is late for school. If lateness continues, you will be asked to attend a punctuality panel meeting at school. Please note that persistent lateness will also be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

For any support with your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Behan, our Attendance and Engagement Officer – sbehan@workingtonacademy.org or your child's Year Group Team.

Further information about Attendance and Absence procedures can be found on our website - https://www.workingtonacademy.org/parents/attendance/

WORKINGTON ACADEMY TERM DATES 2024-25

Full Attendance is expected for all children throughout every half term and term, including the last day before a holiday.

Autumn Term	**(Number of school days = 73)**
INSET DAY (students/pupils not in school)	Monday 2 September 2024
INSET DAY (students/pupils not in school)	Tuesday 3 September 2024
Autumn term begins	Wednesday 4 September 2024
HALF TERM	Monday 28 October – Friday 1 November 2024
Autumn term ends	Friday 20 December 2024
CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS	Monday 23 December 2024 – Friday 3 January 2025
Spring Term	**(Number of school days = 60)**
Spring term begins	Monday 6 January 2025
HALF TERM	Monday 17 February – Friday 21 February 2025
Spring term ends	Friday 4 April 2025
EASTER HOLIDAYS	Monday 7 April – Monday 21 April 2025
Summer Term	**(Number of school days = 57)**
INSET DAY (students/pupils not in school)	Tuesday 22 April 2025
Summer term begins	Wednesday 23 April 2025
BANK HOLIDAY	Monday 5 May 2025
HALF TERM	Monday 26 May – Friday 30 May 2025
Summer term ends	Friday 18 July 2025

