

Dear Parents and Carers

Firstly we would like to congratulate all our staff, pupils and families on a highly successful year across all Omega Multi-Academy Trust schools and to thank you for your continued support. It is an exciting time to be part of Omega Multi-Academy Trust as we continue to grow, develop and thrive together!

Across our schools we have significant numbers of pupils with 100% attendance for the year, a fantastic achievement. In addition, we also know that there are many genuine cases of illness or other circumstances which do require pupils to be absent and we thank families for their efforts in keeping us informed. However, our aim next year is to continue to increase the number of pupils with at least 96% attendance and double the number of pupils with 100% attendance, to ensure we maximise the opportunities and prospects of the young people in our care.

Why this matters...

With that in mind, we write to you to inform you of some subtle changes we are making to our policy and procedures on attendance across our schools from September 2024, all of which are in line with the recently published government guidance; **“Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024”**. Whilst it has been a successful year, as a Trust, we are very conscious that levels of pupil attendance continue to be below pre-Covid levels and some way short of our aspiration for all trust schools to achieve more than 96% attendance. We understand the wide-ranging factors which have contributed to this, however DfE research shows **“high attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of each key stage have higher rates of attendance over that key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.”** Just as important are the opportunities for children to spend time with friends and to develop skills for life. As such, it is vital we support all pupils and their families in ensuring regular, punctual attendance at school.

Research also demonstrates the importance of excellent attendance from the very first day of an academic year. Those pupils with 100% attendance in the first two weeks are extremely likely to achieve high levels of attendance (over 96%) throughout the year, whereas those with absences at the beginning of term are much more likely to be persistently absent throughout the year, in some case studies missing more than 31 school days in just one school year.

We have continued to experience an increase in requests for leave of absence during term time, many of which do not meet the government threshold of “exceptional circumstances”. With this in mind, and following government guidelines, in instances of persistent or intentional absenteeism, our schools are required by legislation to inform the local authority, which may lead to legal enforcement, particularly where parents/carers take their children out of school for term-time holidays. The table below outlines the governments expectations of all stakeholders.



Parents are Expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing committees are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

Accompanying this letter we have provided some useful information which detail the importance of excellent school attendance and hopefully dispel some of the myths which understandably exist. Furthermore, we also encourage families to access the useful resource pack provided by the Children’s Commissioners Office which can be found at <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

Working together...

We are fully committed to providing exceptional learning experiences for all and this includes a relentless focus on pupil attendance. It is our desire to work closely with our pupils and families to enable positive school attendance for all. Should you have any concerns regarding your child’s attendance at school and/or the return to school in September, we urge you to contact your child’s school in advance of the holiday, so that plans can be put in place to ensure a positive start to the new academic year. Our schools successes are based on positive relationships and the critical partnership between home and school.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and we wish you and your families a happy and enjoyable summer.

Jan Malone
Director of Safeguarding & People Services
On behalf of Omega Multi-Academy Trust