



Dear Parent / Carer,

At the start of the new academic year, I am writing to make you aware of our attendance expectations, as well as highlighting some key changes which have been implemented by the Department for Education relating to the use of legal sanctions to reduce absence from school.

All children are entitled to receive a full-time education that allows them to reach their potential. Being in school, and ready to learn, is crucial to pupils' attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. National data shows a clear link between higher rates of attendance and academic progress / outcomes. Our own internal analysis shows that students who attend regularly self-report higher levels of self-esteem and happiness and are more likely to get involved in wider school community opportunities, such as clubs, events, trips and residential.

'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance by the school'. (Working Together to Improve Attendance, DFE 2024).

Out attendance target for all students is 97%

Our approach to attendance is based on the belief that the highest rates of attendance are achieved when students feel they 'belong' to our community, and when they feel safe and happy in school. We aspire to create a school which is calm, orderly and safe and supportive, where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Of course, we also know that some of our students will at times face challenges which may affect their attitude towards school. In these cases, our extensive pastoral team will aim to work in partnership with both the young person and their family to ensure absence is minimised and any barriers to attendance are quickly overcome.

If your child has regular absence from school, a range of actions will be utilised to support higher future attendance. Interventions will include the completion of absence checklists, fortnightly attendance updates, and in more severe cases the individual will be teamed up with an Attendance Partner in school. Further details of our support methods are described in the attached attendance policy summary.

Legal measures are only used when all other appropriate options have been exhausted and where attendance remains a severe concern, or where families have removed their child during term time for an extended holiday or family visit. In order to ensure consistency across the country, and to increased the effectiveness of these legal sanctions, new DFE guidance became statutory during the summer holidays. This guidance has led a number of important changes to how penalty notices are issued.



A penalty notice may be issued if a student accumulates 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) within a rolling period of 10 weeks. Absences are unauthorised when a student:

- Arrives after 9:20am with no valid reason
- Is absent and no reason is provided
- Misses school for an unauthorised leave of absence (e.g., a holiday)
- Does not attend school for an invalid reason (e.g., a friendship fallout, tiredness, or a cold)
- Is absent and requested documentation isn't provided (e.g., medical appointment cards)

In cases where the 10 unauthorised session threshold is met, a penalty notice will be issued to each parent liable for the offence. The first penalty notice will be charged at £160 but can be reduced to £80 if paid promptly. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year period, the court office will consider prosecuting parents which could result in a large fine, community order, or up to 3 months in prison.

As a school we strongly believe that court action should only ever be used as a last resort. Where possible, we will work with the student, their parents, and any related external agencies to tackle any attendance barriers. We believe taking a proactive approach to attendance is the most effective way to reduce absence and the need for any formal legal action. We recognise that regular absence can quickly lead to negative habits which can quickly accentuate any existing barriers to attendance, further eroding the individual's wellbeing and creating additional challenges when they return to school.

If you would like to discuss an attendance related matter or would like to request additional support to maximise your child's attendance and future opportunities, please get in touch by contacting attendance@ormskirk.lancs.sch.uk or your child's Head of Year.

Yours sincerely,

P Staniforth

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