

Dear Parents & Carers,

## **School Attendance**

We are keen to work in partnership with parents to welcome all children back to school following a challenging few months of lockdown. We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to parent/carers for the work you have done in ensuring your child/ren have received education during this period.

We are delighted to be re-opening schools to all pupils where children can return to their usual routines and benefit from and enjoy all that is on offer to them at school.

During the recent lockdowns, the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school at that time due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Schools were then closed to all but a specific group of pupils; those of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Now the circumstances have changed, **it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development.** We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Good attendance is key to your child being able to fulfil their potential and make good progress in school. One of the most important ways a parent can support the education of their child and the child's social, emotional and academic development is to ensure they attend every day and on time.

***School attendance is, therefore, compulsory again from the week of 8<sup>th</sup> March.***

This means from the week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> March, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability of local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

I know that, understandably, some of our pupils and families are hesitant about returning to school. However, in line with our commitment to provide every pupil with an education that is right for them, we will make sure that each and every pupil feels safe, secure and supported. If you are worried about your child attending school, please contact [020 3745 6216](tel:02037456216) where we can discuss your concerns.

In addition, it would not be advisable to take your child out of school for unauthorised exceptional leave once schools re-open, as your child could miss out on the focussed additional support for pupils to close the gap in learning missed during the period of lockdown. Any leave that is unauthorised by the school may lead to Penalty Notices being issued or legal action being initiated.

After so much disruption to your child/ren's education over recent months, the most important thing is that schools and parents work together to get children back into school. We are ready to listen so please contact us if you have any concerns and we will try to help you.