



WEST HILL SCHOOL

Aiming High Since 1927

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you to provide you with some information, some new strategies we are implementing this year, some reminders in relation to our expectations and also some key dates in the coming weeks.

GCSE Results Update

You may recall that in my first letter I provided you with some information regarding the new main performance measure the government and OfSTED will use to judge the quality of education a school provides its pupils.

This new measure is Progress 8. On 12th October 2017 the government published provisional information in relation to this for all schools nationally. I am pleased to say for the second consecutive year our progress 8 figure is above the national average for all pupils and places us in the top 25% of schools in the country. This achievement is even more impressive when boys' progress nationally is below the national average for all pupils.

Pupil Attendance

As you are aware, the government is determined to tackle poor school attendance and the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced amendments to the law which came into force on 1st September 2013. These amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The new law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the head teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The most recent Supreme Court case has reinforced schools' and local authorities right to fine parents who take their child out of school during school time for a holiday if appropriate. We ask that parents support West Hill School in our efforts to help your son gain the best possible outcome from his education by not asking for leave of absence from school in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Pupils need to attend school regularly and missing lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both secondary school and their future life outside. The current Persistent Absentee threshold is 10% absence. This means that if your son's attendance falls below 90%, i.e. misses 19 or more days in a year for whatever reason, he will be classed by the government as a Persistent Absentee.

The vast majority of parents are very supportive of our efforts to ensure good school attendance which is demonstrated by our above average pupil attendance and below average persistent absence level. However unfortunately the attendance of some of our boys is of significant concern despite our efforts to work with both boys and parents. It has therefore become necessary to consider the issuing of Penalty Notices in some circumstances.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in a 12 week period (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents may receive a Penalty Notice of £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution (a separate penalty notice may be issued to each parent for each child).

In law, an offence is committed if a parent fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school. Tameside Education Welfare Service, in conjunction with schools and Greater Manchester Police, will use these powers as an early deterrent to prevent patterns of unauthorised absence developing.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- Where the unauthorised absence of a minimum of 10 sessions occurs on consecutive days



The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also makes it an offence if a parent fails to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion. Penalty Notices may be issued for such an offence.

The Local Authority and West Hill School are committed to providing the best possible future for your child. If you have concerns about your child's attendance at school or if you are experiencing any difficulties, please contact school and ask for help.

Appearance

Thank you to all those parents/carers who ensure that the boys arrive to school every day in full school uniform and that the boys adhere to our exacting standards in terms of their appearance. If any parent or carer is unclear about what is and what is not acceptable in relation to uniform or appearance please refer to our website. If you remain unclear please call the school and ask to speak to the relevant Head of Year.

Mobile Phones

- School is NOT responsible for individuals' personal mobile devices being damaged, lost or stolen. Items are brought to school at the individuals' own risk.
- All Personal Mobile Devices should be switched off at all times and stored in the pupil's bag or Blazer pocket whilst on the school grounds or on a school organised activity off-site, except when explicit permission has been given by a member of staff.
- If a member of staff has given permission for the use of Personal Mobile Devices, they MUST only be used as directed by the member of staff and their use MUST comply with the School's ICT Policies.

Sanctions for the unauthorised use of Personal Mobile Devices

- In the first instance pupils will be asked to turn off their Personal Mobile Device and put it away.
- If the pupil fails to turn off the device and put it away or is a persistent offender, the device will be confiscated immediately and kept in the school safe until written permission for the return from the pupil's Parents/Carers is brought into school. Devices will not be returned before the end of the school day.
- Repeat occurrences will result in longer periods of confiscation and the pupil being referred to their Head of Year

Beginning and end of the School Day

The roads around school are often very congested and potentially dangerous. In order to make the school environment as safe as possible, I should like to ask parents who drop their son off in the morning or pick their son up at the end of the school day to park on Norman Road, Stamford Grove or Astley Road. Please do not drive onto the school site. However please show due care and consideration for the residents of the local area when parking on the surrounding roads.

I should like to emphasise that the great majority of boys will be released at the end of afternoon school at approximately 2.55 pm. There are, however, occasions when your son will need to see a subject teacher about work or a Form Tutor or a Head of Year about problems or concerns. This is of benefit to him. Please do not, therefore, make medical, dental or other appointments until after 3.05 pm.

Half Term

I should like to remind you that school will close for the half term break on Friday 27th October at 2.55pm and reopen on Monday 6th November 2017 at 8.45 am.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. A. F. Harrison

Headteacher