

11<sup>th</sup> September 2009

Dear Parent(s) / Carer(s)

**GOOD ATTENDANCE MEANS BETTER LEARNING**

As you know, we expect good attendance from all our students. The main reason for this is that continuity of learning is vital for a student to make progress in school. The Government also recognise this and therefore set demanding attendance targets for schools. In fact, schools similar to ours across the country (with the same type of social background) are expected to have 95% attendance in Years 7-11. Our performance is measured against this benchmark. We also know that you, as parents, want the best for your children and that having a good education helps to open up more opportunities for them in their adult life. Missing school carries costs for your child in both the short and long term.

Most people would think that 90% attendance sounds very good. 90% achieved in any other aspect of school, and life in general, would be outstanding. However, closer inspection shows that 90% attendance is actually unsatisfactory. It is the same as one day's absence per fortnight, or 20 days' absence in a year or 1½ terms missed over the 5 years between Years 7-11. This adds up to an extremely large amount of work missed and means that continuity of learning is very difficult if not impossible. Consequently, we now use the following descriptions for attendance on our school reports:

100%	-	outstanding	98% or above	-	excellent	95% - 97.9%	-	good
92% - 94.9%	-	satisfactory	80% - 91.9%	-	concerns	Below 80%	-	serious concerns

Evidence from across the country shows that students of all abilities under-perform greatly as their attendance drops below 95%. Any attendance below 90% causes even greater learning difficulties. We will be contacting parents of any students whose attendance starts to fall. Please view this as our attempt to help you and your child to achieve his/her best.

**Holidays in term time**

We would like to take this opportunity to explain to all parents the law about holidays taken during term time. Further detail and background information can be found at the Government website: [www.parentscentre.gov.uk/everylessoncounts](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/everylessoncounts). The basic rule is that schools may grant leave of absence for not more than 10 days in a school year, but this is not automatic. An application form must be collected from school and completed and returned at least 14 days before the date of the holidays. The reason for the request must clearly state why it is **essential** this absence must be taken in term time. The Macclesfield and Bollington Education Improvement Partnership recommends that such requests are not met unless **exceptional** circumstances apply. Unfortunately, lower cost is not an essential reason.

The student's attendance record will be taken into account. If it is below 95% then the request is likely to be denied anyway. Adding the absence caused by the holiday to a lower figure will take it closer to the critical 90% figure.

Taking these factors into account, many requests will be turned down. If parents still decide to take children out of school for the holiday then the absence will be marked as unauthorised. It should be realised that any more than 10 unauthorised sessions of absence (i.e. 5 days) can lead to the involvement of the Education Welfare Service and the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (effectively a £50 fine per student, per parent/carer, rising to £100 if not paid within 28 days). These have been introduced as part of the Government's drive to improve attendance.

We understand that some parents will find these measures very severe. But we believe that regular and high attendance is in every student's best interest and helps to maximise their achievements and enjoyment of school. Our policy reflects accurately the current legislation and we feel that we have a duty to point this out to parents.

Please take a moment to think about the charts on the reverse and discuss them with your child.

Yours sincerely



**S WHITEHURST**  
**Assistant Headteacher**

**YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IS VITALLY IMPORTANT  
FOR THEIR SUCCESS AT SCHOOL AND IN LIFE.**

**A YEAR OF 365 DAYS IS MADE UP OF...**

<p><b>175 non-school days a year</b> There are 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments, which leaves...</p>					
<p><b>190 School days in each year</b></p>	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence	47 days absence
	<p><b>180 days of Education</b></p>	<p><b>171 days of Education</b></p>	<p><b>161 days of Education</b></p>	<p><b>152 days of Education</b></p>	<p><b>143 days of Education</b></p>
100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
<p><b>Good</b> Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start</p>		<p><b>Worrying</b> Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress</p>		<p><b>Serious Concern</b> Not fair on your child. May result in court action against you!</p>	

**GCSE achievements for Year 11 by total absence**

