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“We Only Reach for The Highest”

Thursday 20th October 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

October Half Term Holiday

A quick reminder that we break up for October half term this Friday at 3.30 pm and return to school at 8.55 am on Monday 31st October. I do hope you can all find some time to have a relaxing break with your children.

Attendance and Punctuality Update

I am sure you all remember the letter I sent out at the beginning of this school year regarding the importance of full attendance and punctuality at school.

Punctuality is also highly important. Pupils who arrive late to school are not only losing learning, as lessons begin immediately. Pupils do not like being late into school and we witness how upsetting it can be for them. We want to prevent this.

For those of you with children in Nursery up to Year 2, you all now know that we have started following a new phonics scheme (Little Wandle) with your children. These taught lessons take place every day of the week and each follows on from the next in a precise manner. Children who miss these sessions do then need to catch up on what they have missed so that they can keep up with the others in the class. The longer a child is absent from school, the harder it is to catch up and then keep up – they are always playing catch up. This also places greater pressure on our staff who then have to deliver double the number of sessions, reducing their time to cover other important elements of the curriculum.

The same is true for all subjects – not just for phonics. Maths, for example, takes place on most days in all Key Stage Two classes at the very start of the day. If a child is late, or is missing time from school, they are missing vital input to help them understand, learn and therefore know more.

I was hoping to see a marked improvement in our attendance and punctuality figures – and for many children, this is the case. There is improvement, but together we could do even more. The following table shows the figures for attendance this academic year to date:

The number of children with attendance falling into the following percentage categories. There are 454 children in school (Nursery – Year 6)	
Percentage Attendance	Number of Children
100%	248 (54.6%)
98 - 99.9%	25 (5.5%)
97%	2 (0.4%)
96%	55 (12.1%)
95%	20 (4.4%)
< 95%	104 (22.9%)
[90% or less (persistently absent)]	[52 (11.5%)]

We would expect every child to have an attendance greater than 95%, and therefore just over 27% of our children have less than satisfactory attendance already this school year. At the moment, this is a

concerning statistic and by the number of holiday requests I am receiving, this figure may yet become more concerning. Children whose attendance is at 90% or below, are classed as persistently absent. Trafford then contact me for the reasons why a child's attendance has dipped to this level and want to know how the school is going about seeking an immediate improvement.

We understand that children will be poorly from time to time, and they need time to recover. It may be that your son or daughter has had illness this half term and they fall into the persistently absent category right now, but with improved attendance in the weeks leading up to Christmas, their attendance rate will fly past 95%.

However, we really do need to improve our attendance figures. To date, I have not needed to pursue fines for unauthorised attendance, and you know I will always take into consideration any emergencies or special events, such as weddings, as legitimate reasons for absence, but I am now being asked by the Local Authority to consider fining all those who take a holiday in term time. In the school year to date, 119 school days have been lost to families taking unauthorised annual holidays in term time.

To place our attendance in context, pre-Covid, our annually reported attendance figure to the government was always around 97.5%. Currently, our attendance stands at 96.43%.

There are things you can do to improve your child's attendance and avoid falling into the persistent absence category:

- if your child is unwell and you are unsure whether to send them to school, contact the office to seek advice on 0161 973 3504;
- do not take any holidays during term times;
- speak to school staff with any concerns;
- talk to your child about the importance of them being in school and let them know how important you feel it is.

We want to help families get their child to school on time. Here are some things you can try:

- have everything you/your child needs for school prepared the night before;
- ensure that your child goes to bed reasonably so they are not too tired to get up in the morning;
- ensure your child has a good night's sleep by minimising their use of devices at bed time;
- have a consistent bedtime routine for your child;
- set an alarm to allow plenty of time for your morning routine in getting to school on time;
- bring your child to school so that he/she is entering their classroom as the school bell rings at 8.55am.

Lost learning is compounded if your child has a high absence rate and does not arrive at school on time. For example, if you take two weeks holiday during term time, your child has two weeks of illness throughout the year and regularly arrives ten minutes late, they will miss 26.5 days (just over five weeks) of learning a year. This level of absence makes it impossible for any child to keep up.

The number of children with punctuality falling into the following percentage categories. There are 454 children in school (Nursery – Year 6)	
Percentage Punctual	Number of Children
100%	385 (84.8%)
99%	0 (0%)
98%	30 (6.6%)
97%	0(0%)
96%	9 (2%)
95%	12 (2.6%)
<95%	18 (4%)

The start of each school day is the most important time for teachers and pupils. Routines are set, timetables are given, and learning begins. If a child misses the first five minutes of the day, they spend fifteen minutes catching up with expectations.

When the resources arrive, we shall be distributing House Points to all those children who arrive on time each day. We shall also close the pupil entrance gate at 8.55 am for entry – still enabling parents a means of exit. This will mean two things – firstly, if you arrive at school after 8.55 am, you will need to enter school via the main door, and secondly, whichever member of staff is at the pupil gate will be able to return to their other work promptly.

I know how terribly difficult it is to park near school at rush hour, and this may be making some of you arrive a little later than you would like to, as you can more easily park near school. For those who can, please consider walking to school, and for those who are unable to do this, please try to park further away from school than perhaps you normally do, to try to reduce congestion, which can really slow things down when traffic is coming in both directions outside school, often leading in a log-jam.

Our aim is to see every child in school on time every day.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr Searle', written in a cursive style.

Mr Searle