

August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Excellent Attendance – School Re-opening, Covid-19, Persistent Absence and holidays

As you will be aware, it is the Government's mandate that schools should re-open for all children from September 2020 and we are looking forward to welcoming them back. Many of you will have questions about attendance: this letter and the Covid-19 Attendance Guidance [also attached here] set out what will be expected from parents, carers and students, as well as answering some of the more frequently asked questions.

The Government has said that it **expects all children of compulsory school age to return to school from September 2020**, with only a very few exceptions. This means that school attendance will be mandatory from the beginning of the school year on 3rd September, and the legal duty on parents and carers to send their child to school will apply.

We appreciate that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and school closure last year that some students may be anxious about returning to school after such a long time away, particularly in Years 8, 9, 10 and 12, who did not get to come into school regularly in June and July. If this is the case with your child please contact your Head of Year as soon as possible and before the start of term, so that we can understand and address any concerns your child or you as parents and carers have. Working together we would hope that through explaining our safety plan or arranging a school visit when the rest of the school are not in and employing other strategies, we can help your child move forward to attending regularly again.

We will first and foremost seek to work with you to get your child back to school and will give a little more time than we would normally to resolve potential issues with attending school. However, the law states that children of statutory school age who are on roll at a school or academy must attend regularly and punctually. Roundwood Park operates the Penalty Notice process for 15 or more unauthorised sessions of absence [equivalent to 7.5 days because one session is half a day] in the current or previous term, which follows the law, Local Authority guidance and is policy amongst all Harpenden Schools.

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The Penalty Notice requires you to pay a fine of £60 within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days (e.g. two parents with two children could incur a total cost of £480). If parents and carers do not pay the fine they will be liable for prosecution for this offence. Penalty Notices are administered by the Local Authority and they have the responsibility for issuing them to parents and carers.

That said, with Covid-19 still a potential threat in our community, if your child is exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms then they must be kept at home and you should book a Covid-19 test that day. If the test proves to be negative and your child no longer has symptoms similar to Covid-19 then your child can return to school immediately, ideally the next day. If the test result is positive then please consult the ***Covid-19 Attendance Guidance, also attached to this email***, to know what to do next and how long they will be absent from school.

When well enough, your child will be able to continue learning or catch-up on work missed while at home, because teachers will be providing them with the work done in class via Google Classroom, so that it can be completed remotely during their period of self-isolation.

Every day ailments such as a common cold can usually be self-managed by a student in school with suitable over the counter medication. Please, unless your child is seriously unwell, showing Covid-19 symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19, do encourage them into school to ensure that they do not miss out on learning and social opportunities.

Since September 2015 the Government has set the threshold for Persistent Absence to 10%, classing any student with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee. This equates to just over 3 days of absence per half term and applies if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If a student were to get a score of 90% on a maths test this would be very good. If, however, a student's attendance is 90% over their five years of compulsory school age, from Year 7 to 11, this equates to missing half a year of school, which clearly is detrimental to any individual, regardless of their academic ability.

Missing school means missing out on learning and this can have an impact on a child's development and attainment as well as their personal development. In certain circumstances non-attendance can also raise safeguarding concerns and lead to poor mental health. There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attaining good examination results which will potentially open doors for our students. Additionally, it is through good attendance that students maximise their full potential, enhancing their life chances for the future. There will be an impact on your child's education and exam results if their attendance is not consistently above 95% throughout their schooling – as well as on their general well-being.

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This is why we set the minimum target of higher than 96% attendance for every student to achieve. We also appreciate that of course on rare occasions students can be seriously unwell, which is why we celebrate attendance that is higher than 98% as exceptionally good, rather than only 100% as some other schools do.

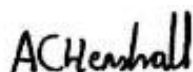
Requests for absences during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid booking holidays during term time. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and this may lead to a Penalty Notice. By taking family holidays during the designated holiday periods, you will be supporting your child's full school attendance, learning and development. There are 13 weeks of the year to take holidays out of term time.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope by working together we can help your child reach their full potential and make the most of all their opportunities at Roundwood Park.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Henshall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a capital 'A' and 'H'.

Alan Henshall
Headteacher