



11 January 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sure you have seen in the news this week that children being absent from school is a national concern and that this is currently a priority for the Department of Education. As we go into the new year, there is going to be a renewed focus on attendance at Ridgeway Academy this term.

It is my duty as Headteacher to address poor attendance and the duty of my Governing Body to hold me accountable for it. The vast majority of parents at Ridgeway Academy ensure their children attend in line with our expectations and I am grateful for this, as are my staff.

I cannot however ignore that for too many children at Ridgeway attendance is below that expected. It is a stark and frightening fact that whilst we are driving up standards across the school, many are missing out on this due to persistent absence.

Parents/carers should understand that attendance is a serious issue for children at our school. Absence at Ridgeway Academy is far higher than the national average. This impacts on outcomes for children individually and the school as a whole.

I will be actively seeking to enforce the necessary legal actions to address absence affairs where improvements are not seen and/or parents do not engage with or recognise the legitimate concern.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Ridgeway Academy follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures. In conjunction with the AAT Attendance Lead, the governors reserve the right to consider requesting Herts County Council to take legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Headteacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Illness

Absence is absence, and impacts on a child's learning and wellbeing, regardless of the reason.

Please see NHS guidance on when your child is too ill for school. Students are able to attend school with coughs, colds, sore throats, just as adults are expected to go to work.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Lateness

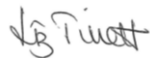
If your child arrives late, beyond the close of register, the late mark is converted to an unauthorised absence, 'U' which will contribute to their overall attendance figure.

Finally, Ridgeway Academy would like to work together with you to improve your child's attendance. Please communicate any issues you have with your child's attendance to your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year as soon as possible so that we can offer appropriate support.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Mitcherson
Headteacher



Liz Tillett
Chair of Governors