



20 February 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Pastoral and Safeguarding Reminders

Spring is almost upon us and as part of my regular updates, I would like to take this opportunity to share some important pastoral information and to remind everyone of our reporting routes for any safeguarding concerns that may arise.

In this letter, I shall be both reminding everyone of the importance of good attendance as well as drawing your attention to my upcoming workshop for parents and carers, 'Online Risks and Harms'.

Reporting safeguarding concerns reminder

We have a trained team of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). They are:

- Dr Hall - Senior DSL
- Miss Cartwright - Pastoral and Safeguarding Manager
- Ms Jenkins - HOY
- Mrs Muddle - HOY
- Mr Tiley – HOY (on leave until April 2023)
- Mr Alderman - HOY
- Mrs Wheeler – Inclusion Manager
- Ms Bateman – Student Welfare Advisor
- Mrs Day – Mental Health Lead

Concerns can be raised via the DSL team or indeed any colleague in the school that a student feels comfortable to talk to. All staff receive annual safeguarding training, including how to provide support when disclosures are made.

If a student does not want to speak directly to a member of staff, then there are also students trained in anti-bullying and/or mental health support who can be approached. As well as providing immediate peer support, they will also ensure that the DSL team are informed.

We also have our Stay Safe (staysafe@testbourne.school) and No to Bullying (ntb@testbourne.school) alerts that can be used to raise concerns with our DSL Team.

The following link from our website provides access to resources for a range of mental health, SEND and other safeguarding and pastoral issues. QR codes will take you directly to the appropriate place and, as always, if you wish to discuss things with us then please do not hesitate to contact us. [Signposting resources grid.pdf \(testbourne.school\)](#). This is part of our wider wellbeing support [Wellbeing - Testbourne Community School](#)

Our Child Protection Policy is available on our school website [HERE](#)

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Attendance

I wrote to all parents and carers in July 2022 stressing the importance of good attendance and its link to educational outcomes. I should like to remind everyone of the key points that I made and provide further advice.

Since the pandemic, school attendance has become a national crisis. This was highlighted in a recent article in the Guardian¹.

National attendance rates have dropped significantly, and schools have rightly been tasked with robustly tackling this and getting children back to school. At Testbourne, we continue to be above the national rates for attendance and will continue to work with students and families to ensure that attendance in school remains high. This is a moral imperative so that our students are not significantly disadvantaged in the future. Absence from school can significantly impact on attainment and the wellbeing of students, as well as potentially leading to increased safeguarding risks. It is essential, therefore, that everyone has the highest expectations of our students and that families, and school staff work together to support them in actively engaging in their learning, attending regularly and punctually.

The information and reminders in this letter are to help everyone with our continued focus on attendance.

Details related to attendance at TCS can be found on our website at [Attendance - Testbourne Community School](#)

When is my child allowed to miss school?

You can **only** allow your child to miss school if:

- They are too ill to attend - for most minor illnesses e.g., colds, headaches etc students do not need to take time off school. The following website provides useful information and can be found on our school website in the 'Attendance Section' [Can a child go to school/nursery today? :: Healthier Together \(what0-18.nhs.uk\)](#). The NHS provide similar guidance [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- You have advance permission from the school. You must complete an absence request form **before** you arrange for your child to have time away during term-time. Each request is considered on an individual basis. Absence requests will only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, and it is for the school to decide what will be determined as exceptional. Examples of circumstances that are **not** exceptional include:
 - Cheaper holidays or holidays that have already been paid for
 - Absence that coincides with important school events such as the start of term or exams

As a general guideline 'exceptional absence circumstances' usually only apply to immediate family. Requests for leave related to extended family and friends are likely to be refused. If a child is taken out of school without any advance permission or for reasons other than illness, we may have to fine parents or begin other legal interventions for non-attendance.



What is the impact of non-attendance?

It is often better to look at this from the perspective of lost learning time rather than just a crude percentage attendance rate.

Any student with an attendance rate of less than 90% is regarded as persistently absent and an attendance rate of 50% or less is regarded as severely persistent absence. Non-attendance of these magnitudes will have a significant impact on the achievement of students resulting from the loss of learning time. The table below puts this into a context.

Students are expected to attend school for 190 days (or 38 weeks) in an academic year.

| Attendance rate (%) | Number of school days lost per year | Approx. number of school weeks lost per year (year in brackets) | Number of school days lost over 5 years* | Approx. number of school weeks lost over 5 years* | Number of years lost over 5 years* |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 90 | 19 | 4 (0.1) | 95 | 20 | 0.5 |
| 80 | 38 | 8(0.2) | 190 | 40 | 1 |
| 70 | 57 | 11(0.3) | 285 | 55 | 1.5 |
| 60 | 76 | 15(0.4) | 380 | 75 | 2.0 |
| 50 | 95 | 19(0.5) | 475 | 95 | 2.5 |
| 40 | 114 | 23 (0.6) | 570 | 115 | 3.0 |
| 30 | 133 | 27 (0.7) | 665 | 135 | 3.5 |
| 20 | 152 | 31 (0.8) | 760 | 155 | 4.0 |
| 10 | 171 | 35 (0.9) | 855 | 175 | 4.6 |

*if the attendance rate was to remain constant over 5 years

As you can see from the table above an attendance rate of 90% may not sound too low but this equates to **a month** of lost learning in an academic year and **half a year** over a student's school career from Year 7 to Year 11.

For a student with severe persistent absence (50%) this equates to **half a year** of lost learning in an academic year and **2.5 years** of lost learning over a student's school career.

It is essential that students are attending school, or their learning will be adversely affected, and this could have a hugely detrimental impact on their achievement overall.

In May 2022, the Department of Education published statistics highlighting the link between attendance and achievement². This is based on an analysis of the 2018/2019 GCSE examination results. The key headlines are:

1. Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall attendance rate of 91.2% over the key stage, compared with 94.8% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 96.3% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.



2. Of those pupils who were persistently absent (<90%), 35.6% achieved grade 9 to 4 in English and maths. Among severely absent pupils (<50%), this figure was 11.3%. This compares to 83.7% of pupils with 100% attendance and 76.3% with an attendance rate between 100 and 95%
3. Similarly, 16.8% of persistently absent pupils and 5.0% of severely absent pupils achieved grade 9 to 5 in English and maths compared to 66.4% of pupils with 100% attendance and 54.4% who missed with an attendance rate between 100% and 95%.

We know the impact that COVID-19 has had both on lost learning and the wellbeing of students. That is why we needed a planned strategy for recovery - published earlier last year³ Regular attendance to school is an essential part of that recovery.

We know that in most cases families want their children to attend school regularly. Sometimes families face difficulties, however, that means a child may not be attending. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance or if you need some support, then please speak to us as soon as possible. We are always keen to support and offer the benefit of our experience as it is much easier for all concerned to help students to attend if we can work together before things become a significant or serious problem.

Finally, members of the Attendance Action Alliance have worked with the Department for Education to develop this [short guide](#), which helps parents understand how they can work with their school and local authority to support their children to attend school and get the right support. I hope you find this useful and a link to this is also on our website.

¹['Cultural shift' since pandemic causing attendance crisis in English schools | Schools | The Guardian](#)

²[The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4, Academic Year 2018/19 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³[Mental-Health-Booklet-February-2022.pdf \(testbourne.school\)](#)

Online Risks and Harms Workshop – Tuesday 7 March 2023

As part of our ongoing safeguarding education and support, I shall be leading an in-person workshop looking at online risks and harms. The aim is to provide parents and carers with advice and information to support your children staying safe in the digital world. Your child is welcome to attend with you. Numbers will be limited so it will be on a first come, first served basis.

This workshop will take place in our Theatre Hall on **Tuesday 7 March from 6pm until 7.30pm.**

If you would like to attend, then please complete this Microsoft Forms:

<https://forms.office.com/e/Hhvmbky1x9>

Finally, and as always if you have any concerns or questions then please do contact us.

Yours faithfully

Dr Hall
Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)