

December 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

As we reach the end of the first term I thought I would take the opportunity to contact parents to inform you of some important developments.

School time holidays

We have seen an increase in the level of holiday requests being made during school time this term. Whilst we appreciate it is often cheaper for families to take holidays during term time, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the detrimental impact this is having. Ten days absence from school does mean a student will miss 5% of their school year which will undoubtedly have an impact on the progress made. Whilst illness and other emergency absences cannot be avoided, we do feel it is essential that students should not miss school due to attending holidays.

There is a common misconception that parents have the 'right' to take students out of school for a holiday for up to 10 days each year. **This is most definitely NOT the case and it is solely at the discretion of the school.**

If an absence to go on holiday is agreed by the school the absence will still be recorded but will be authorised. However, if a holiday absence has not been agreed by the school it will be recorded as being **unauthorised**.

Our stance on this is clear and we ask parents **NOT** to remove children from school for holiday purposes and we will only authorise such requests in extremely exceptional circumstances. Therefore, from this point forward the school will not be authorising any requests for students to be absent whilst attending a term time holiday unless in exceptional circumstances that have been discussed and agreed by the school at least 2 weeks in advance. Any term time holidays that are taken without the agreement of the school will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may lead to the authority issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice for attendance.

Illness and absence

It is clear to most people that positive attendance at school benefits students greatly. It enables them to engage with the curriculum fully and achieve their full potential. Indeed, Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is 'The right to learn and go to school'.

Whilst we understand that ill health can prevent a student attending school through no fault of their own or their family, it is essential that all students attend school as close to full time as possible.

We ask that each potential absence from school is considered and assessed by parents before making the decision to keep a child away and that parents use the following scale of seriousness

as a guide to determine if the student should be in school or not. Whilst this diagram is not exhaustive or prescriptive, it should give some guidance as to whether a student should attend school even if not feeling 100% fit and well. It is hoped that parents will use their discretion in deciding whether to send their child to school with the aim being to maximise their attendance and thereby maximise their progress.

| Level of Seriousness | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|---|----------------------|---|---|--|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Student is fit and well. | Complaining of feeling tired following a late night before. | Woke up feeling a little unwell but able to eat and drink . Minor headache or stomach ache. | Common cold/sniffles. | Minor accident requiring superficial medical treatment. | Heavy cold or cough. | Heavy cold or cough with <u>A HIGH TEMPERATURE.</u> | Serious break to limb affecting mobility. | Contagious illness such as Flu or Norovirus. | Hospitalised. |
| Example of possible ailment | | | | | | | | | |
| Pupil should Attend School | | | | | | Appropriate to be Absent | | | |

I would also like to remind all parents of the importance of informing the school at the first opportunity if a student is to be absent through ill health.

The vast majority of students at Hawarden High School have an excellent attendance record well above local and national averages. However, some students choose to stay off a little too easily when they should be in school learning.

We acknowledge there will always be situations when ill health prevents a student from attending school for periods of time, but we hope that if all parents follow the advice and guidance given above, a number of students with previously low attendance rates will start to see an improvement to both their attendance at school but ultimately their ability to engage and progress within school as well.

Flintshire Education Authority and Hawarden High School reserve the option to serve fixed penalty notices and prosecutions to parents whose children have a poor record of attendance without any justifiable cause.

Travelling to and from school

We have been contacted a number of times by members of the public and other parents highlighting issues by some students who travel to and from school on foot. There have been a number of reports of students of all ages who seem to show a total disregard for their safety and the safety of other road users. Witnesses have reported children walking onto the road instead of using the pavement and even seemingly to be deliberately walking down the middle of the road forcing vehicles to make emergency manoeuvres to avoid an accident.

It has also been reported that when some children have been challenged over their poor road safety awareness they have been abusive and defiant. Reports of this nature have been from various locations but in particular Lower Aston Hall Lane has had a larger number of reports made. Please would parents and carers reinforce the importance of effective road safety, particularly in areas with limited pedestrian facilities?

Use of bicycles

In a similar vein we have received some very worrying reports from members of the public regarding the extremely unsafe riding of bicycles by a small number of students who use theirs to travel to school and home again. This includes reports of a total lack of road sense, dodging in and out of traffic, riding in the middle of the road and so on.

We are also aware that at times some students are riding bicycles that are unfit for use without fully operational brakes, no lights, frequently giving lifts to each other and only a very small number wear appropriate bicycle helmets.

School cannot take responsibility for the way bicycles are used outside of school hours and so we urge all parents of children who ride bicycles to ensure there is a clear understanding of the dangers and vulnerability of being a bicycle user on the public highways.

School will continue to provide a secure location for bicycles to be stored during the school day but do not accept any responsibility for damage or losses incurred when bicycles are left there. The bicycle shed will be locked between 8.40 am and 3.10 pm and students should still provide additional bicycle lock/chains to secure their bicycle when using the shed. Any bicycle deemed unsafe to use or any report identifying unsafe use of bicycles on the public highway the school will withdraw the facility to store bicycles for those individuals.

House Points

A number of parents have recently asked for clarification regarding how the school uses 'House Points' to reward and encourage our students so I thought it was appropriate to include an explanation for all parents.

All staff in school are encouraged to reinforce and reward examples of positive behaviours and attitude in students in order to encourage more of the same in future. Whilst this can often be as simple as a verbal well done or a comment made on work we also wanted to have more tangible method to show student how well they are doing and we award house points.

House points will be awarded to individual students for a variety of reasons such as recognising a high quality piece of work, producing work that is above the expected level, showing responsibility within school, participating in events, representing form, class or school at events

and so on. The list is very long and not exhaustible and we trust staff to use their professional judgement to determine when to award a house point.

House points can be issued in 2 different ways depending on the location and nature of the event.

In the classroom, teachers can use our 1,2,3 system on registers to recognise when a student has excelled in a lesson. A grade 1 is automatically transferred to become a house point every half term. Out of the class room and away from a computer terminal staff will use the page in the planner to initial their recognition of excellence for a student.

Each half term every student's running total for house points in the planner and the number of '1s' issued in lessons will be combined to give a total for each student and these will contribute to the running total for each tutor group and House which will be displayed and shared around school in the hope this will encourage individuals to make the effort to contribute to a wider team/community effort.

We will recognise success for students at individual, tutor group and house level and hope to promote a healthy sense of completion, contribution and recognition for 'a job well done'.

Standards Cards

It was a pleasure to be involved in the half term draw of clear green Standards Cards for Years 7 to 11. It was very encouraging to see that in each House there was an average of around 35% of the students who still had a completely unmarked standards card from the beginning of September. A card for each House was drawn and the winner received a £25 cinema voucher for them to use. Every student was issued with a clear green standards card this half term and will get a new one again in January.

All we ask in return is that students accept they have a responsibility to ensure they are meeting the very simple and basic expectations of the school such as having equipment, wearing uniform correctly, being punctual etc.

It has been very satisfying over the course of the first half term to see how many of our student body are rising to the challenge and are taking much pride in their involvement in the school. We hope that students and parents alike continue to show positive support for what we are trying to achieve and we will continue pushing all our students to aim and achieve as highly as they possibly can.

If you have any queries regarding the content of any of this information letter please do not hesitate to contact your child's form tutor or Head of House for further discussion.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely



Mr G Hughes
Assistant Headteacher