



The Sutton Academy

Together Students Achieve

Principal: Mr P Willerton

8 October 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

The challenges which schools have faced on student attendance since the pandemic have been well documented in the national news, and those challenges are acutely felt at the academy. I regularly write to you about the positives, however, in this letter I ask for your support in tackling poor attendance.

Last year the academy's attendance fell just below national figures. We had made an excellent start to this academic year being above national data, but the last 10 days have really hit the overall figure.

The academy has significantly invested time to support those students who struggle with their attendance and to overcome barriers with their learning. There will be times when a student is just too unwell or unable to attend, but too many students are missing too many days when they should be attending the academy.

When students are at the academy, they have more opportunities to mix with their peers, they do not create gaps in their learning, and in the long term it makes a significant impact on the grades that our students achieve. Alongside this, students who are absent miss out on everything else that the academy has to offer; the enrichment opportunities, the interaction with staff and the friendships they form for life.

I have previously shared last year's Year 11 cohort as an example; the students with attendance above 95% went on to achieve progress scores, which placed them in the top 10% nationally. The students with attendance below 90% achieved progress scores far below this.

In conversations with parents, it is regularly mentioned that the days students are absent from the academy are occasional, but the number of occasional days adds up to create significant absences. At the academy we set a target of over 96% attendance for all students. This target allows for students missing 9 days per year through illness. We are trying to prepare our students for life beyond the academy and in the world of work. An attendance rate of 95%, which would be 9 absences out of 190 term-time days, would not be acceptable in the work place. The current government definition of Persistently Absent is 90%, this would be missing 19 days a year. This again would not be seen as acceptable for the students as they grow into young adults, and yet just over one in four students at the academy (and nationally) have this level of absence.

Once again, I understand that there will be genuine absences for some students across the year. There are a number of students who go through genuine hardship and challenges which may impact them attending, however, one in four of our students should not be missing 19 days a year, and are therefore classed as persistently absent.

This is a plea to send your child into the academy at every opportunity, even on those days when they do not feel 100% - please send them in. I can assure you that we will contact you if your child is genuinely unwell. Typically, we do not have to do this, so please do send your child in. Good attendance to the academy really is essential for student success, and we hope that we can work in strong partnership with parents/carers to achieve this.

Yours faithfully



Mr P. Willerton
Principal



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