

18th October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are now five weeks into the Autumn term and 182 students have achieved a fabulous 100% attendance and a further 84 students have achieved 99/98% attendance, so at the start of this letter I would like to sincerely thank those parents and students who take attendance and punctuality seriously and go the extra mile to meet school, Trust and Government expectations – thank you and keep doing what you are doing!

Whilst I accept that children do sometimes get poorly, we have seen an increasing number of students taking time off for non covid related illness in the last few weeks and the beginnings of a worrying trend around poor punctuality.

As a school we make no apologies for high standards around attendance and punctuality and we ask that parents support us with this by ensuring that their child is in school **every day, on time** and able to access the education that they are entitled to.

After the half term break, we at school will be deploying everything in our power, including rewards; tutor time conversations; assemblies; letters and phone calls home; student detentions and, for persistent or repeat offenders, **court proceedings and fines** to make sure student attendance improves.

I appreciate that this may feel challenging or even confrontational, in some ways, it is. The last eighteen months have been difficult for us all, but now we need to get back to normal and expect the highest standards, without excuses, for all the students in our care. As with behaviour, children need firm boundaries and a continual repetition of the rules and expectations. This allows them to thrive. Simply put: **if your children are not in school in their lessons they cannot learn and if they don't learn they will not fulfil their potential in our school.**

The expectations regarding attendance are clearly set out below and school will be re-iterating these with students and having a particular focus on attendance between now and the December break. Please check ClassCharts and note your child's attendance and speak with them about where they currently are using the chart at the end of this letter. Anything less than 95% attendance is of concern and requires action. **(if you do not have access to class charts it is VITAL that you follow the link shown below and select "I don't have an account yet from the login page. Please phone school to obtain your access code.**

<https://www.classcharts.com/parent/login>

ILLNESS: It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child is **in school, on time** every day. Too many students are taking odd days/ two days off for mild colds, stomach aches, headaches: period pains, earaches or tiredness. These are all low-level complaints that can generally be remedied with paracetamol and a little more resilience. Of course, students should still be regularly lateral flow testing, and should they have any Covid symptoms / test positive on an LFT they **MUST** then take a PCR immediately. **ONLY** a positive PCR/ waiting for the results of a PCR (normally 24 hrs) is a reason to stay off school for such mild symptoms (and again we will ask to see evidence of this).

APPOINTMENTS: Doctor's appointments, dentist appointments, optician's appointments **must not** happen in school time and your child can expect to be challenged if they try to leave school for one of these. (Hospital /orthodontic appointments will require proof via the letter/appointment card for a student to be released and authorised). Even though school accepts these cannot always be changed they rarely take a full day, and we expect students to come to school in and around them.

PUNCTUALITY: The vast majority of students enter school by the gate on Thorn Lane a/ Haworth Road and this **closes at 8.20 sharp**. Students are expected to be on the school site by 8.15 ready to start learning. It is **NOT** acceptable to be late for school. I know that life is busy and traffic around our school sometimes problematic **but a great many students manage to get in on time every single day**. School also acknowledge that buses are occasionally late, and we make allowances for this, but if students are regularly late and are dropped off by parents, I will be asking you to send your children on foot or bring/ send them at an earlier time to make sure they are not late. I'd ask you to take the bigger view around this: by taking away a young person's excuses for being late and by expecting punctuality from them you are equipping your child with skills for their future working life and supporting their independence.

MEETING WITH US: We love to meet with parents as it helps us to help your child. As a professional organisation however, we run a tight and often very busy schedule. Therefore, when we make appointments with parents, we ask you to be on time for them so that it does not impact of the daily routines of the school and understand that we cannot always meet with parents "to order". We will not be able to meet with parents in our break and lunch times as key staff are all on duty (between 12.00 and 13.35). Students who have been fixed term excluded will be expected to attend readmittance meetings with their parents **before** the start of the school day. This is common practice in the vast majority of UK schools as these are exactly the students who we need back in school promptly and ready to learn.

CONTACT: We need you to be contactable at all times. This is a safeguarding and legal requirement. Many of us in school know what it is to be working parents but when you entrust your child to Beckfoot Upper Heaton you make a commitment to support our rules and work with us. As such **we need your up to date telephone number and email address and an expectation that we can contact you or a close family member who can speak for you during school hours**. Please ensure that we have contact details that are up to date and that you have credit on mobile phones/ a backup plan for emergencies.

As I stated at the outset - this is about a re-set of expectations, us all "getting back to normal" and first and foremost is in our students' interest.

Our rules are clear, however, **we are here to help**. There are two weeks until half term when we will begin our attendance strategy. If you need support or have any concerns about your child's attendance and punctuality, please do contact your child's PDL for a discussion.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Mrs D Morgan-Davis
Deputy Headteacher – Culture & Ethos

As a parent or carer you can help by:

- ensuring your child understands the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality
- taking an interest in their education – asking about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- discussing any problems they may have at school and inform their Student Support Officer to pass on concerns quickly
- not allowing them take time off school for minor ailments – particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work
- arranging appointments after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays will help to prevent disruption to your child's education and to the school
- being open and willing to work with us to improve your child's attendance

As a student, you can improve your attendance by:

- speaking to a trusted adult about the reasons why you might not want to come to school
- trying hard every morning to get up and get to school, unless you are really unwell
- getting an early night, feeling tired on a morning can make getting to school harder
- make sure you get to school on time every day