



SUTTON
COMMUNITY
ACADEMY



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Head of Academy: Mr L Taylor

Attendance Update January 2024

Dear families,

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all back to school and trust that everyone is settled into the spring term with lots of successes to look forward to. I hope the start of the new year has proven prosperous and energising. As a community, we can look forward to a successful and exciting spring and summer term showcasing our students' talents and ensuring that attendance and student outcomes are optimised.

It has been wonderful to watch our community reconnect. We have much to celebrate. Culture in the academy continues to improve, our extracurricular and enrichment programmes are in full swing, and our Year 11 and Year 13 pupils are fully engaged in final examination preparations.

However, as I write to you today, in our third week back in January, 10.1% of our pupils were absent, and 12.4% of Year 11 pupils who have their GCSE examinations in three months are absent from school. Whilst we are improving every aspect of our work, too many of our pupils still need to be here to benefit from them.

Attendance nationally is a cause for concern. However, working together ensures Sutton Community Academy is a real vocal point within our trust. It leads on attendance and provides our community and students with the opportunity to reach their career goals.

All students must have excellent attendance at Sutton Community Academy. Research shows that even a few days of absence can hurt students' performance.

It's never too late to benefit from good attendance:

Nationally, more than half (54%) of pupils who were persistently absent in Year 10 and then rarely absent in Year 11 passed at least 5 GCSEs, compared to 36% of pupils who were persistently absent in both years.

But attendance is essential for more than just attainment:

Regular school attendance can facilitate positive peer relationships, a protective factor for mental health and wellbeing.

I took on the role of Assistant Principal, which includes overseeing 'Attendance' in April 2023, because I know the community well and have the best interests of our families and children at heart. I also know from experience what it will take to be more than just a 'Good' school and to reach the standard I know our pupils deserve.

As an integral part of the Academy during the COVID-19 pandemic, I fully understand the challenges and long-lasting harmful effects of the pandemic on our community. I am also very aware that many



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of our children, for any number of different reasons, suffer from anxiety, poor mental health and other needs exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic over time.

We must be clear, though, that regular absence from school will only make the long-term outlook on our children's challenges even worse.

For example, if our pupils do not attend school regularly, or every day most weeks, they will not get the qualifications they deserve. This leads to fewer opportunities, less chance of a high-quality college place or apprenticeship, and a limited realistic chance of attending Sixth Form or going to university and, as a result, less earning potential in adult life.

On the other hand, pupils at our school in Year 11 who attend at least 95% of the time do better than national expectations in their exams, leading to more opportunities and higher confidence levels.

We understand that family time and wellbeing are paramount, but by taking holidays in term time, children miss 25 or 50 lessons, missing crucial content that they may not revisit for a year or more. By having odd days off or not attending on a Friday, pupils are again missing key learning and arrive the following week confused, creating anxiety as they try to catch up with everyone else.

Many of you have supported your child in having excellent attendance. I acknowledge the remarkable work of parents in prioritising school during a difficult time. However, it is essential to share the scale of the problem with everyone, which is indeed a national crisis, and I want us to work together to improve it. The Government is also rightly concerned and has made several interventions that I am sure you have seen in the press recently. As a community, we can do better than being part of a national trend.

We will always do anything we can to help our families and children. If you need help with your child's attendance, contact us so the Senior Leadership Team and I can help you.

Attendance must improve rapidly, but we need your support to do that. This way, more of our children can benefit from the great opportunities here, and I know we are all aligned in wanting the best for them.

We look forward to sending out some exciting information on attendance competitions, with prizes up for grabs and rewards for our top attendees throughout the year.

We wish you all the best for 2024 and look forward to working closely with our community of families.

Kind regards,

B Jones

Mr B Jones
Assistant Principal