

April 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Summer Term 2022: Essential Attendance Information

We would like to welcome children and young people back to school for the last term of the school year. This is the first time since the 2018/19 academic year that schools have been open to all pupils for a full year, and it has been noticeable that this has had a tiring effect on some of our pupils. We would, therefore, like to provide you with some important information, which will hopefully help your children achieve the best possible attendance between now and the summer.

This is a very busy term with statutory testing in five of our year groups, including GCSEs for our Year 11 pupils. Our aim is to support children and young people throughout this period to ensure they are able to be their best. Please do not hesitate to contact school if you are concerned about your child during the testing and exam season.

While other areas of school life have continued to return to normal, attendance rates are very worrying and can in turn have a hugely negative impact on your child's learning and social skills. Poor attenders are more likely to experience issues with forming or maintaining friendships and they very often do not achieve the qualifications they are capable of. This will have a long-term impact and often affects young people into adulthood. Prior to the pandemic, the national average school attendance was over 95%, and Appleton Academy was very regularly outperforming this, which is why we are now beginning a big push to achieve this once again.

There are a number of ongoing issues that we would like to tackle first, all of which are unacceptable in the majority of cases, these include:

- Children and young people regularly having one day off each week
- Parents taking their children out of school for holidays during term time
- Medical appointments during the school day, which in many cases result in a full day/near full day of absence
- Parents unnecessarily removing their child from school for a period of time due to concerns, such as pupils falling out with friends or parents disagreeing with behaviour management decisions made by staff

The drive to improve attendance will be the number one priority for the remainder of this year and for the next academic year.

Expected Attendance and Classifications

99% and above	Outstanding attendance	
97% and 98%	Good attendance	
96%	Satisfactory	This is the national average attendance and is possible for all pupils except the very small number of pupils with specific and significant medical conditions
95% and below	Unacceptable	95% attendance is the equivalent of two weeks off school a year
90% and below	Totally Unacceptable	This equates to four weeks of missed school. At this point your child becomes a persistent absentee
85% and below	Educational Neglect	Six weeks off school – a full half term

Childhood Illness

For the vast majority of children and young people, it is unusual for illness to lead to poor attendance. We understand that young children may catch childhood illnesses, such as chicken pox, and this tends to lead to a single block of absence while the child recovers, but not regular absences throughout the year.

Some children will also have a specific medical need that makes them more likely to have periods of absence for illness. However, our pupils at Appleton with medical needs have historically still been able to maintain good attendance.

It is likely that children with regular absences due to illness will need help to build an 'attendance habit'. If your child is genuinely experiencing regular illnesses that are affecting their attendance, please speak to us and we will make a referral to the school nursing team and can also look at what supportive provisions can be arranged in school.

To achieve our aims of bringing attendance back to the consistently good and outstanding levels we were seeing pre-pandemic, the following changes to our Attendance Policy are being made (these changes are made in line with DfE, Bradford Local Authority and previous Appleton policy and will be rigorously enforced:

Medical Appointments

Medical appointments must be booked outside school hours or during half term or other holidays, unless for a hospital consultation appointment that cannot be moved. Please do not take medical appointments for children during the school day as they will not be authorised due to the valuable lost learning time to your child. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, and with medical evidence **provided in advance** (appointment card, letter from the hospital etc) will the appointment be authorised by school. If this is the case, please try (wherever possible) to take the appointment at the beginning or end of the school day.

If an appointment during school hours is unavoidable, your child is still expected to attend school for the remainder of the day either side of the appointment. Doctor's appointments are usually no longer than half an hour, and pupils taking a day off to go to the doctor (which has been happening in a number of cases this year) is, therefore, totally unacceptable.

Pupil Absence

If your child is ill, please contact school and give a reason for their illness on the first day of absence. School can be contacted through the following channels: phone, text, email.

The school attendance line number is: 01274 600550 followed by option 1, or call 01274 421053 (24-hour answerphone)

You can also text us using the following number: 07860 095503, or you can email via: attendanceteam@appletonacademy.co.uk.

Holidays

Holidays during term time have never been authorised by school. **If you choose to ignore this, the law now states that after 3 school days (6 sessions), you will receive a fixed penalty notice.** Fines for holidays during term time are issued by the Local Authority, via the Magistrates' Court, and they start at £60.00 per parent, per child.

Please do not take holidays during term time as, again, this is lost learning time for your child. Although you may claim that a holiday is a 'learning opportunity', your child needs to be in school accessing the high-quality teaching and relevant curriculum for their age, which is provided in the classroom.



Please be aware that fines are issued for all but very exceptional cases.

As ever, our staff are here to support you if you need to speak to someone about your child's attendance. Please get in touch with the Attendance Team in the first instance - Mrs Mann or Mrs Wavell – by calling 01274 600550.

I would like to thank parents and pupils who have been maintaining their good attendance in the face of the challenges we have had to live with in recent times, and I would appeal to everyone to support our initiatives to improve the wider attendance of pupils at Appleton Academy.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heler Jones".

Ms H Jones
Executive Headteacher