



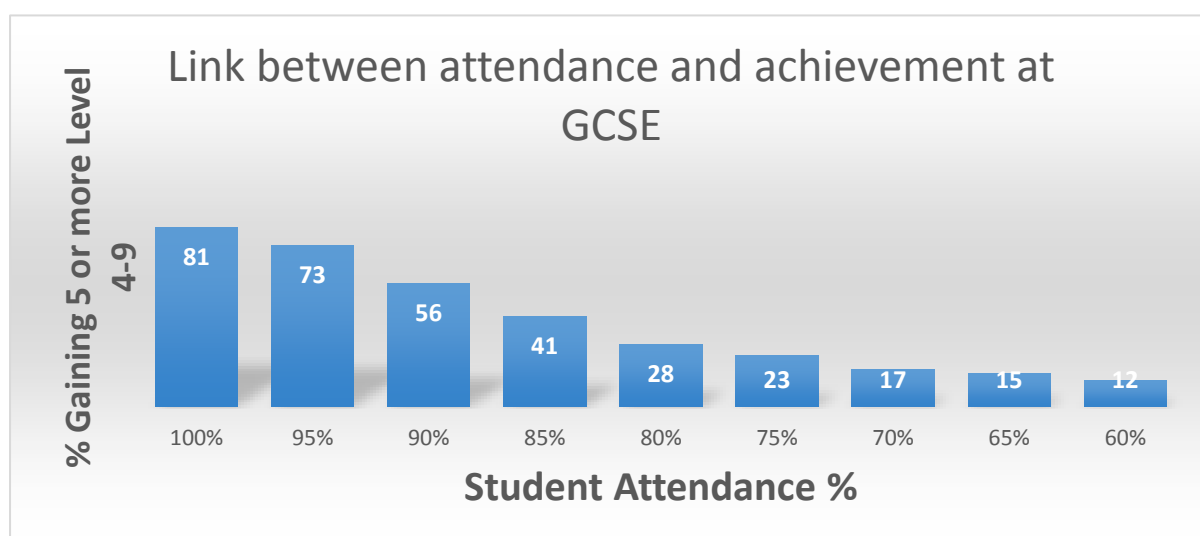
September 2021

Dear Parents & Carers

Attendance 2021/22

As part of our school improvement plans this year, we will be focussing very closely on attendance to raise our rates well above the national average. COVID-19, school closures and home learning have had a significant detrimental impact on the education of young people. That is why now it is more important than ever for our students to have good attendance at school.

There is a clear link between attendance and academic achievement at GCSE. The lower the attendance, the less likely it is that a student will achieve five or more GCSEs at grade 4 to 9, highlighted in the graph below (Department for Education data).



The national average attendance for a high school pupil is 95%. This equates to approximately 8 days absence across the whole school year. An attendance level of 80% equals 1 day per week absence for the whole of the academic year.

In order to improve your child's attendance please follow the advice below:

- Arrange appointments wherever possible outside of school hours. If an appointment is at 10am and local, then your child can come in for lesson one then return promptly after the appointment.
- Personal transport issues are not a valid reason not to be in school. For those not entitled to free transport, or live out of catchment, it is the parents' responsibility to get your child to school.
- Minor injuries such as twisted ankles/sore knees/sore hands are not a reason to stay at home. We can support and accommodate you in school.
- Medical advice and evidence shows that anxiety is made worse by not coming in to school. All our pastoral staff are 'Mental Health First Aiders' and trained to provide support to students.

- Inform school early in the day if your child is absent along with the reason for absence. If there is not a valid reason, absence will not be authorised.
- Holidays during term time will not be authorised.
- Follow all current COVID advice if symptoms are present or if a child has a positive Lateral Flow Test.

Students and their forms are regularly recognised and rewarded for good attendance in our assemblies, earning school award badges and achievement points.

For students who are below the target of 95%, a meeting will be held to discuss attendance. If poor attendance continues then school can refer to Norfolk County Council either for a Fixed Penalty Notice or to start Fast-track proceedings. Fast-track is the Norfolk County Council system where parents of children with a record of poor unauthorised attendance could face prosecution in a Magistrates Court, leading to a significant fine or in extreme cases imprisonment.

Outlined below is legal information we are obliged to share from Norfolk County Council in relation to attendance and Fixed Penalty Notices.

Attendance at school and legal intervention

[Research](#) commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. Marshland High School aims to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents and carers the law requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

In the DfE policy document entitled, *'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'* it states, *'Headteacher's should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. **The application must be made in advance** and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. **A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion'**.*

If school does not receive a request for leave, the Headteacher will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the Headteacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

- at least 9 sessions (4.5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during the last 6 school weeks

The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Any pupil at Marshland High School who meets the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, payment arrangements will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days of the receipt of the notice. The fixed penalty notice is per parent per child. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale would result in legal action.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully



Mr T Duce
Deputy Headteacher