



February 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Working Together to Improve Attendance**

Firstly, may we thank Parents and Carers who regularly ensure that their children attend school at all times. We understand that absence is sometimes inevitable and hope that you see this letter in the spirit of partnership and support that is intended.

We are proud to work in schools in and around Romsey and we are extremely grateful for families' support to date. School attendance still needs to improve across the area and the country and therefore we invite all families to work even more closely together with local schools to give Romsey children the best possible start to their lives, by attending school every day.

This has now become a national agenda because there is a very strong correlation between high attendance and high achievement, as well as good emotional health and positive relationships. Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, has recently written a letter to all school leaders on school attendance. He says that a prolonged period of absence is likely to heighten a child's anxiety about attending school in the future; acting early and building resilience is essential.

Research shows that absence from school, for whatever reason, can disadvantage a child by creating gaps in learning, which affect a child's ability to succeed. For example, it can be seen that at GCSE, there is a fall in grade for every 5% that attendance falls below 95%. This is illustrated in graphical form overleaf.

### **Next Steps for schools and families in the Romsey Partnership of Schools**

All schools within our partnership are committed to working together with families and each other to support the improvement of Romsey children's attendance and punctuality to school. We would like to suggest the following for some of the ways in which we will be working in partnership to do this.

#### **What we ask of parents:**

1. To continue to be alert to when it is better to encourage your child to attend school rather than take time off, using these resources to help:  
 HCC: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>  
 NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>
2. To work with the school and health care providers to ensure optimum school attendance for your child. For example, if your child suffers from anxiety, ask the school and/or GP to signpost self-help resources, and speak to school staff about any worries your child may have to see how these could be overcome.

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3. To try to schedule routine appointments to take place outside of school hours to minimise time taken off school
4. To be mindful of 'trigger points', such as the first week of term and exams which are often challenging for children who suffer from anxiety. To recognise the importance of encouraging your child and minimise school missed during these challenging times.
5. To be mindful that when parents decide to have your child registered at a school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

#### What we ask of the Romsey Partnership of schools:

- 1) All schools in the Romsey Partnership are aiming to achieve a goal of 100% attendance. We will work with families to overcome any barriers and seek creative solutions together.
- 2) We monitor all absences thoroughly and share attendance data with the Local Authority. We will contact you if we have any concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- 3) Occasionally, a child's attendance becomes so low that the school cannot authorise any absences without seeing medical evidence such as a prescription or a GP appointment.
- 4) All schools in the Romsey area will issue penalty notices/fines for cases of unauthorised absence (which may include family holidays) where the pupil has been:
  - *Absent for 10 or more half day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.*
  - *Persistently late for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed.*
  - *Persistently late before the close of the register, but the school has met with the Parent or Carer and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness if, and when, the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.*
- 5) Although the Hampshire Code of Conduct remains unchanged, from September 2022 schools can submit a Legal Intervention Team referral once a pupil has received 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 100-session period and it can be evidenced by the school that they have been unable to resolve attendance concerns, including through the issue of a penalty notice.

Thank you for working with us to maximise your child's successes through good attendance at school.

Yours sincerely



Mr A Portas, Headmaster  
The Mountbatten School  
The Romsey Partnership of Schools



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