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30th September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

STUDENT ABSENCE

Welcome back to a new academic year at TNHA. In this letter my aim is to make clear what the procedures are for reporting any absences to the academy, and to explain the steps that are taken if attendance drops below a certain level. There is a great deal of information in this letter so please read through it all carefully and contact me if you have any queries. Attendance of any individual student is not simple, and I do understand that there are several contributing factors as to why students may have low attendance. But the expectations for attendance will be made clear in this letter and this is a starting point against which all attendance will be sorted initially. As always has been the case, if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason you must call the absence line on 01760 726169. You must do this for every day that your child is going to be off school as I cannot assume how long any pupil could be absent for.

Absences from school tend to fall into one of these categories:

Illness: If your child is too unwell to attend school, the absence must be reported on every day that they are not going to be in. For things such as coughs or colds, students are expected to attend. If your child is going to be off for longer than three days, then medical evidence will need to be provided for this absence to be authorised. This can include prescription medication, doctor's letters or any documentation surrounding a medical emergency. If your child has been physically sick or has had a contagious illness, we do expect them back in the day after they have last been sick. The 48 hour sickness policy that applied to primary schools does not apply here.

Medical Appointment: Please bring in the letter confirming the date and time of your child's medical appointment in advance so that your child will be marked as absent on the day. If the appointment is in Swaffham, students will be expected to be in school for the rest of the day. Any appointments further afield will be granted a half day authorised absence, but only in exceptional circumstances will a whole day be authorised for a medical appointment. It is requested that routine dentist and optician appointments are carried out during school holidays and that students do not miss learning time to attend these.

Holiday: If a student is taken out of school to go on holiday, this will have to be made clear to the office in advance by filling in an Absence Request Form. This form is then checked by the Principal who will then decide whether the absence meets the criteria to be authorised. We will respond in writing with the decision.

Interview/Other Appointment: For any other planned absences, please fill in the request form mentioned above and hand to Main Reception. This can be for things such as college taster days, college interviews, sporting competitions (not arranged through school), etc. We will respond in writing with the decision.

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Coronavirus: With the ongoing pandemic, the government have made clear that they expect all children to be present in school with minimal expectations. If the child or anyone in the household has any coronavirus symptoms then the household must self-isolate and seek a test kit. For further advice please see the NHS Test and Trace app.

Initially, if there is any cause for concern with a student (whether they were absent for longer than a few days or if patterns start to emerge in their absences), I will speak to the student myself to establish if there are any other issues that are contributing to his/her absence and if there is anything that needs to be acted on by the SSL (Student Support Leader).

If attendance levels continue to be low, a meeting will be scheduled with the student and their SSL to remind the student of the importance of attendance, and the repercussions of further absences. This will be followed up with a phone call home to discuss attendance. If attendance levels still continue to drop, then a meeting will be scheduled with yourself as parent/carer, the Attendance Officer and an Assistant Principal. This will be the last step in attempting to improve procedures before the matter is passed on to Norfolk County Council and a Fast Track process is started. Enclosed is a leaflet explaining how the Fast Track process works and what it entails.

Also enclosed is a leaflet explaining the Fixed Penalty Notice procedure for when students have more than 4.5 consecutive days of school off with an unauthorised absence. This isn't just in the case of holidays; it can be for any absence that has not been authorised.

Overall, having good attendance is intrinsically linked to good attainment when leaving High School and it is therefore in the student's best interest to be in school as much as possible. I hope to have your support throughout the year in making sure that your child's attendance levels stays above 98%.

Yours faithfully

Miss H Mather
Attendance & Admissions Officer