



2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we prepare to enter the new academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you all. My name is Lucy Mitchell and I have been the Attendance Officer here at St Edward's for the past six years. My primary role is to monitor and report on school absence, verify that every child is accounted for every day and to monitor absence figures to ensure all students are reaching their full potential.

The new term will bring about a degree of adjustment for us all and all of the staff here understand that returning to onsite learning after many months may feel daunting to some. With this in mind, I have sought to answer any queries regarding school attendance that you may have. Please feel free to contact me at any time, should you wish to talk to me about your own circumstances and how these may impact on your own child's school attendance. My contact details can be found at the bottom of this letter.

### **Does my child have to return to school?**

Yes, as of September 2020 the Department for Education has reapplied the law. It is compulsory for your child to receive a full-time education.

### **Why is it so important that my child returns to school?**

We know school is the best place for children to be, because it's vital for their education, development and wellbeing. The Prime Minister has set out that getting children back to school is a matter of national importance so they can learn and be with their teachers and friends and the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, has made clear that this has been the Department's goal since scientific and medical advice indicated it would be safe to do so.

### **What happens if there is an outbreak in school?**

If there is an outbreak at the school, local health protection teams will work with us to agree what action is needed. Usually, the school will not need to close fully. If we need to close for some children, we will have a contingency plan in place so that your child's education can continue. If our local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, the government will decide what actions need to be taken.

### **My child is anxious about returning and may refuse to attend. What should I do?**

It is understandable that many children may feel apprehensive about starting St Edward's or returning here and please be assured that we are prepared for this feeling to continue for some time to come. We pride ourselves on our robust pastoral approach and ask that if you are having trouble with getting your child into school, that you please communicate this with us in order that we can be there to help your situation.



## What will happen if I don't send my child to school?

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where students will not attend school due to Covid-19.

- If anyone in your household presents with symptoms of Covid-19, please organise for a test to be taken. If you receive a positive result, all members of your household must self-isolate for 14 days. This absence will be recorded as authorised and *there will be no sanction issued by the school or local authority for this non-attendance*. If the member of the household tests negative, your child can stop self-isolating and return to school.
- In all cases of self-isolation, we ask that you please inform us immediately of the outcome of the test. We will not require evidence of either a positive or negative test and will warmly welcome your child back to school after their period of self-isolation.
- As usual, we ask that parents please plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to remove your child during term time. We ask that you also consider that your child may need to self-isolate following a trip overseas. If you are required to be in quarantine upon arrival home, *there will be no sanction issued by the school or local authority for this non-attendance*.

## I am a vulnerable person. What happens if we are required to enter a local lockdown?

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. We ask that if this applies to your situation, that you please share the letter with us for our information and your child will not be sanctioned for this non-attendance.

I hope that this information has offered you with some reassurance and guidance when it comes to school attendance. I understand that every situation is different and ask that you please contact me if your question has not been answered above or if I can help in any way. It is the school's responsibility to record attendance and follow up on absences on a daily basis. Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices are always a last resort in nearly all situations and we will always seek to resolve low attendance through communication with parents and students.

Yours Sincerely

Lucy Mitchell

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