



ST. AIDAN'S

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Start of the new school year 2024: we need your help

September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

We look forward to students returning to school this week, welcoming them back and starting the new academic year. This year, we have joined together as secondary headteachers in Harrogate and the local area, to collectively say, we need your help.

We know that in some schools across the country, attendance levels are back to pre-pandemic levels. Students in these schools are achieving some of the highest outcomes across the UK.

With a clear focus on attendance and with the support of our community, we can ensure all children, in all our schools in Harrogate, have the highest levels of attendance. We believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our students in school, on time, every day.

You make a difference

We know that parents can have a significant effect, and we really appreciate your help and support in ensuring your child comes to school every day. Simply put, high attendance tends to lead to the best possible outcomes for children. We want to work with you to achieve this and encourage you to contact your school if there are any barriers, large or small, that we can address to keep children in school. We appreciate that every child and every family's situation is unique.

We know that sometimes our students cannot come to school because they are really unwell—and that's the right thing to do, for themselves and other students. Medical advice is clear however that children with a mild illness will often be well enough to attend—for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance *Is my child too ill for school?* NHS (www.nhs.uk) is designed to support parents in their decision-making about mild illness.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

What are local schools doing about this?

Since the pandemic, schools have been exploring and implementing many initiatives to boost attendance. It has been a key priority for most schools across the country. These initiatives have included, for example:

- a greater focus on attendance in assemblies,
- closer work with identified groups,
- improving communication between home and school,
- increasing staffing to support attendance and
- putting in place rewards and competitions for students.

Despite our best efforts, we are still not back to where we would ideally like to be and that is why we are collectively writing to you at the start of the new term. Research from FFT education datalab last year found that 58 per cent of year 7-11 students who missed school at the start of the year, went on to miss at least 10 per cent of sessions across the whole academic year. We need to get this right from week one.

Thank you for your support

We hope that you welcome this letter in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share our mission to do the very best for the children of Harrogate and the local area. We want to be open about our aim to return to the high levels of attendance before the pandemic.

Should you have any concerns, please do contact your child's school and they will be more than willing to provide you with additional support and guidance.

Yours Sincerely



Mrs S Dover
Headteacher

This letter has been endorsed by:

N Renton	Harrogate Grammar School
S Mort	St John Fisher Catholic High School
S Dover	St Aidan's Church of England High School
T Milburn	Rossett School
S Gill	Harrogate High School
C Martin	King James School
K Stephenson	Boroughbridge High School
K Jordan	Nidderdale High School & Community College
D Wild	Harrogate College

Headteacher: Mrs S Dover