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28th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been another busy week in school where we have had Parent Partnership Meetings and our first "Headteacher's Questions" session. Whilst the parent meetings were not as well attended as I would have liked, I had approximately 70 children quizzing me on a number of issues including uniform, playtimes, start and end of day procedures, playground equipment and plans for the pond area. I have a list of issues raised by the children and some very sensible suggestions which may be quite straightforward to implement. I was incredibly impressed with how well the children presented their questions and arguments and whilst we are not about to do away with school uniform or get a trampoline on the playground (!), the Pupil Parliament and I have plenty of things to talk about at our next meeting.

I am hopeful that, when I manage to arrange our first online Parent Partnership meeting, more parents will be able to join us in finding out about future plans for Westdale Juniors and raise their own questions and suggestions about how we can work together in the interests of our children.

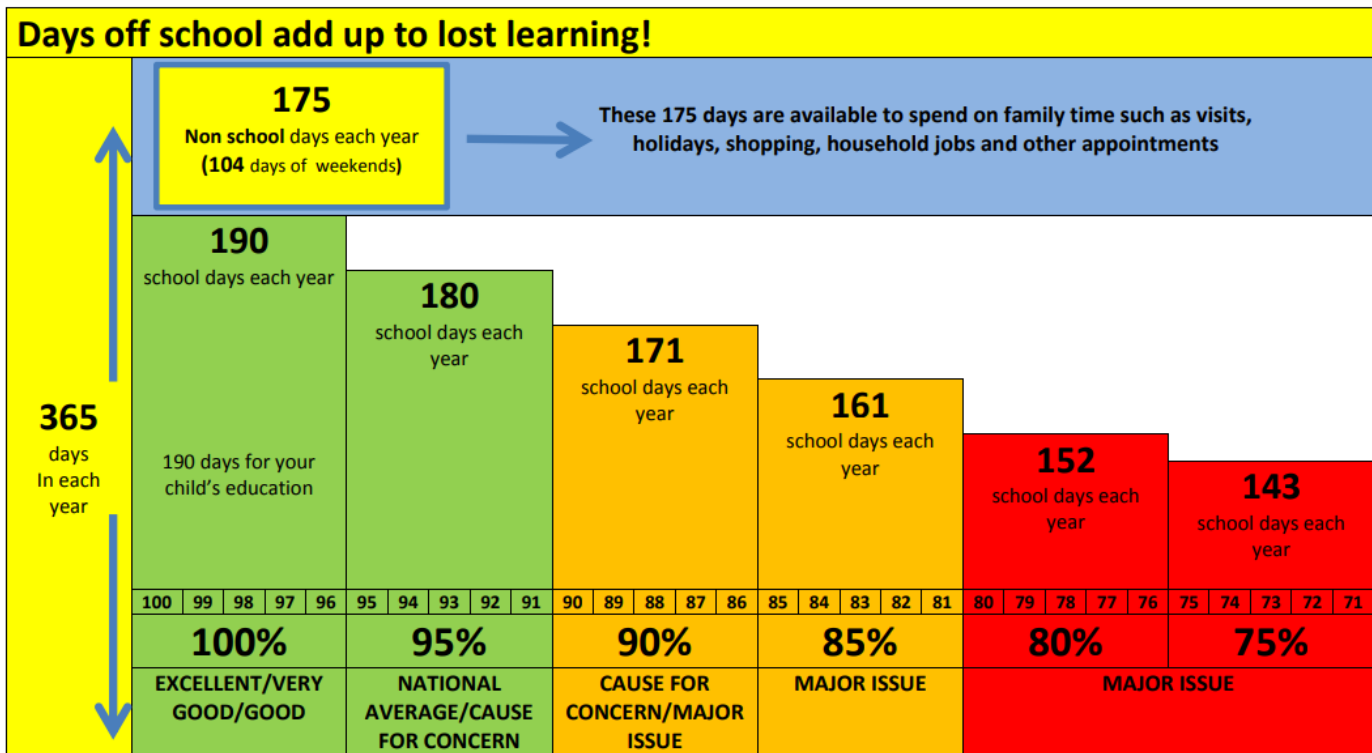
Attendance

Over the past couple of weeks, we have issued attendance letters to all families where attendance for the Autumn term was below 95%, which is the national average for attendance. Attendance would have dropped to this level with approximately 4 days absence during the Autumn term. At Westdale Junior School, our attendance target is 98% as we strive for excellence in attendance levels for our children. The purpose of issuing these letters, which I am led to believe have not been issued before, is to make parents aware of their children's current attendance figures and, to highlight that should patterns continue, what the impact would be over the course of the year.

As I have said in previous newsletters, there is an inextricable link between attendance, academic achievement and social development. We also acknowledge that children do get ill from time to time and that, during the Autumn term, there were many bugs around including flu, Covid and Strep infections. We are also aware that the DfE issued guidance around keeping children at home if a Strep infection was suspected and in the case of Covid infections. In the vast majority of cases, Spring and Summer terms bring fewer illnesses and children's attendance will naturally increase over the remainder of the year. Should you have any questions or queries about the days your child has missed, please do get in touch with the office in the first instance so that we can investigate any possible discrepancies.

Where children have attendance below 80%, which equates to approximately 13 days off during the Autumn term, I have contacted these families directly to try to work with them to try and diagnose any underlying issues and to work with families to try and support them to improve attendance. Already we are seeing attendance levels improving this term for many of our children and many families are also working really hard on ensuring their children are on time every morning. We do appreciate your support with this.

The graphics below give a useful breakdown of what attendance levels equate to over the course of an academic year and over the 4 years of junior school.



Attendance over the course of an Academic Year

Attendance %	Annually	Missed Days in a year	Missed Weeks	Missed Days Over 4 Years	Impact over 4 years
100%	Excellent	0	0	0	
99%	Very good	1.9	0.38	7.6	
98%	Very good	3.8	0.76	15.2	
97%	Very good	5.7	1.14	22.8	
96%	Good	7.6	1.52	30.4	Approx. a half term
95%	National Average	9.5	1.9	38	1/5 of a year
94%	Below Nat. Average	11.4	2.28	45.6	
93%	Below Nat. Average	13.3	2.66	53.2	
92%	Requires improvement/worrying	15.2	3.04	60.8	Approx. 1 term
91%	Requires improvement/cause for concern	17.1	3.42	68.4	
90%	Cause for concern	19	3.8	76	2/5 of a year
89%	Serious concern	20.9	4.18	83.6	
85%	Major issue	28.5	5.7	114	3/5 of a year
80%	Major issue	38	7.6	152	4/5 of year

Your sincerely,

Ruth Kyle – Head of School