

The Axe Valley Community College & Sixth Form Centre

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January 16

Dear Parents / Carers

The Axe Valley Community College is working in partnership with parents to improve school attendance. **We would like to congratulate the many parents who make sure their children attend school regularly.** During our termly celebration assemblies it is impressive to see so many students receiving 100% attendance certificates.

We are writing to update you about our policies and procedures surrounding attendance. The college is committed to improving achievement through attendance and monitors the attendance of all of its pupils. Any pupil whose attendance falls below 90 per cent will be monitored, and as a parent, I am sure you will agree that your child must attend school regularly to ensure that the maximum benefit is obtained from the education provided. It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send your child to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence.

Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class and evidence suggests that children who do not attend regularly:

- do not achieve well in exams
- find it difficult to maintain friendships
- are more likely to become involved in crime
- miss out on opportunities in further education and the world of work

Absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher, within the boundaries set by the Education (Pupil Registrations) (England) Regulations 2006.

Please remember that parental illness, going shopping, visiting family, truancy, not wanting to go to school, alleged bullying (speak to school immediately to resolve the issue) are not acceptable reasons to be absent. All of these will be recorded as unauthorised absence, including if your child arrives at school after the close of registration. Leave in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

We have a duty to make you aware of legal implications around unauthorised absence that all schools are required to follow.

Legal action that may be taken include:

- **Issuing penalty notices:** Each parent receives a penalty notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £480. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.

- **Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) - court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.
- **Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - court can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence you to a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life.

How does your child compare?

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	290 lessons

If your child's level of absence is of serious concern you will receive another letter advising you about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence may result in the School and the Local Authority taking legal action.

We will improve attendance by making it clear within the school and local community that unauthorised absence is not acceptable.

Again, we would like to thank those parents who make sure their child is attending school regularly and are therefore benefiting fully from their educational opportunity.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind parents that punctuality is crucial and that students are expected to be at morning registration lesson 1 for 8:50am. We will inform parents half termly regarding late marks and unauthorised late marks.

From January we will also be monitoring and informing parents of identified students about the number of days absence for illness and medical appointments taken in the autumn term. As a college we fully accept that children become ill and need time to recover. We also take the view that some students have excessive time off school and we need to consider how this can be improved.

In some cases we may wish to involve our Education Welfare Officer Jonathan Galling who can be contacted on Jonathan.Galling@babcockinternational.com . Should attendance become a growing concern, our EWO will meet formally with parents to consider if prosecution is a suitable course of action. Again, we will monitor these levels half-termly.

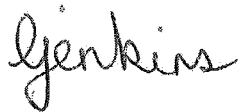
Holiday in term time continues to be a contentious issue for some families so I hope the following college position enables you to make an informed decision should your family consider having holiday in term time. The college only authorises such holidays when exceptional circumstances are the case. Parents are asked to complete a S2 form that can be obtained from the school or website.

It is the schools' policy that where requests are unauthorised, a penalty notice will be issued at a rate of £60, per child, per parent if paid within the first 3 weeks of the notice, rising to £120 per child per parent. After this time, if unpaid, the matter is referred to the Magistrates Court. The S2 form contains further details on this matter as well as Devon County Councils policy when a second period of unauthorised absence is taken within a two year period.

Finally, we are also developing our reward systems for the vast majority of students who attend regularly and are punctual. All students who have reached or surpassed 98% in any term will be written to by the Headteacher and praised by year heads in assemblies.

If you wish to discuss any of the points in the letter with myself, or our EWO, please make an appointment through the school office.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small star above the letter 'i'.

Mrs L Jenkins
Assistant Headteacher