

Headteacher's Newsletter Term 4 2016

Sixth Form Review

At the start of this term we commissioned an external review of our sixth form. This was carried out by an experienced consultant and ex Headteacher. He spent the day in lessons, meeting with students and with the sixth form staff team. He was very impressed with the excellent teaching he saw, along with the tools we are using to track the students' progress. Part of his visit was to validate the predictions we are making for student's results this summer, and he commented that what he saw would support such strong predictions. We are really pleased with the positive feedback from the review, and very proud of our sixth form students with whom he was very impressed.

Attendance Challenge

The attendance of many students at Wrotham School is not good enough. At present whole school attendance sits below the national average and is even lower for girls. As a high performing school we should have high levels of attendance.

What is your child's attendance this year?

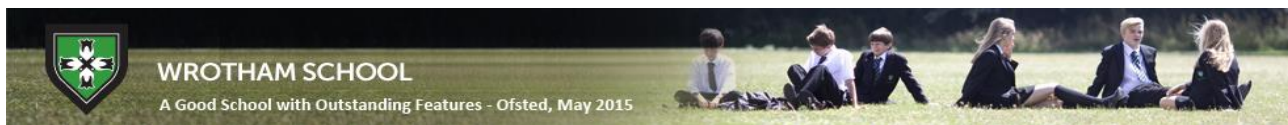
% Attendance	What does it mean?
80%	Equivalent to 1 day off a week and 38 days a year
90%	Equivalent to 1 day off every 2 weeks and 19 days a year
95%	Equivalent to 1 day off a month and 9 days a year

I don't think many employers would accept attendance below 95% unless there was a significant illness involved. The link between good attendance and good progress at school is obvious and we want to see that all our students have the best chance of success. We hope we can work in partnership with all parents to ensure all students have attendance of 98% and above. Sometimes parents don't value good attendance at school and we have to use the law to ensure that all students have the same opportunities. Therefore, on rare occasions we do issue penalty notices to parents of children with poor attendance if there is not sound medical evidence.

Changes to attendance policy:

We work in close partnership with the Attendance Service to ensure your child receives support and help in achieving full-time education. Our new attendance policy reflects recent changes in how absences are addressed by the school and outside agencies. One significant change is how penalty notices are issued. If the absences are not due to evidenced ill health, a Penalty Notice can be issued for 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 school days) during any 100 possible school sessions (50 days). These do not need to be consecutive days. The Penalty is £120 per parent, per child – reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

If there are details contributing to your child's poor attendance that we could potentially support with, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Progress Tutor. I hope that by working together, we will be able to ensure an immediate and sustained improvement.



Unsung Heroes Rewards

A big thank you to all the parents that joined us this term to celebrate our 'Unsung Heroes'. Each teacher could nominate only ten students from across the school who consistently display positive attitudes to learning. I really enjoyed this event and getting to spend time talking to so many of you.

Regional Schools Commissioner Team Visit

You may now be aware that the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) have responsibility for academies in England. This month we hosted a visit from a member of the RSC for the South East team. She was very impressed with the school and especially so with our 'Up for the Challenge' initiative.

Up for the Challenge Update

Following the overwhelming success of this work we have decided to keep it running with years 7 and 8 and to extend it into year 10, with a focus on 'Up for the A grade challenge'. This work has really proved to everyone how much our students are capable of, and it has shown again that as a non-selective school we are not second best to the grammar schools; students at Wrotham can also achieve the highest grades if they are challenged and supported to do so.

Wellbeing and Mental Health at Wrotham School

In the last six months there has been a great deal of press and media coverage about the mental health and wellbeing of school aged children. Earlier this year I established a Kent Headteacher Mental Health Network and the views of Headteacher colleagues was that we were all seeing an increase in the number of students in our schools presenting with mental health problems. Our work with Time to Change over the last two years has been focussed on challenging the stigma faced by so many with mental health problems, with the aim that we can have a school where students feel comfortable talking about their own mental health and may seek help and support early, before they reach crisis point.

In addition to this work we have chosen to offer our own talking therapies at Wrotham. These are offered by Juliette Willet who is employed to work at Wrotham for three days a week. Juliette is a school counsellor and is in the final stages of qualifying as a psychotherapist. She can see students on a one to one basis and also does group work. There is extensive information about this service on our website which includes information about parental consent.

Sport Relief Success

I am very pleased to announce that last week the students and staff at Wrotham raised over £2,000 for Sport Relief. The week started with a staff netball competition on Monday after school. Lunch time football matches on the 3G followed with cake sales at break. 8LYO completed a sponsored silence and on Friday students could pay a pound to dress with a sporting theme. The staff versus our Pro Soccer scholars match on Friday was also very popular with the students. Friday also saw our soccer scholars running football workshops and matches for over 300 students. Miss Flannery did a wonderful job leading the week's activities.

Kent Maths Challenge

We took a team along again to this challenging mathematics competition. You may recall that last year the Wrotham team beat all the local grammar schools. This year we were the only non-selective school in the competition and were one team member down. Our team didn't win but they gave it a good shot and showed real grit and determination. We are very proud of them and look forward to next year.



Duke of Edinburgh

The Duke of Edinburgh Award programme is well underway once again with 25 pupils in year 9 completing the Bronze Award and 10 pupils in year 10 completing their Silver Award. After Easter they will be starting their expeditions with day walks and practice expeditions during April and May. With the new cohort starting, it is time to say a final well done and thank you to last year's Bronze participants. 32 pupils, currently in year 10, 11 and 13 successfully achieved their Bronze Award and attended the biggest ever Maidstone and Malling presentation evening at Invicta Grammar School last December.



On behalf of all the staff and Governors at Wrotham School, I wish you all a peaceful Easter.

Matthew Wright MA
Headteacher