

25 March 2013

Dear parents and carers

The spring term seems to have raced by and it's hard to believe Easter is upon us, especially as we've seen snow recently. My commitment to you is that the school will stay open unless I have no option but to close it due to very poor weather.

We lost a couple of days earlier in the term due to bad weather and to rebalance the number of teaching days this year we have cancelled two training days so that students can catch up on missed learning.

Terms dates for the rest of this academic year

Please note the following dates for the rest of the school year:

- School breaks up for the Easter break on Thursday 28 March;
- All students return to school on Monday 15 April (this is **not** a training day);
- Half term is Monday 27 May until Friday 31 May;
- All students return to school on Monday 3 June (this is **not** a training day);
- The school is closed for one day on Friday 28 June (all schools in the ARK network);
- All students return to school on Monday 1 July (this is **not** a training day);
- Students break up for the summer on Friday 19 July (changed).

BBC News School Report

You may have seen on BBC recently that a large number of schools in the country took part in the BBC News School Report. ARK Kings played its part and you can see a number of our students' reports and videos on our website at <http://www.arkkingsacademy.org/our-students-on-bbc-school-report>

End of term achievement assembly

We will finish our term on this week with an end of term assembly in which we recognise the achievements of many students this term.

I am proud of those that every day turn up on time, work hard, take a full part in school life and reap the benefits of their hard work. If your child has received a reward at the end of term, look out for a letter that I will send to you notifying you of their achievements.

Year 11

Students in Year 11 are entering the final stage of their secondary school days. The exams season is nearly here and the next six weeks will be crucial in getting students prepared for their exams. The outcomes of these can be life changing. They will affect what your child can do next. I've been impressed by a good number of students staying after school to do further studies – that's just the work ethic that will serve them well at college and in the world of work in due course. Well done to those students who have seized the moment.

You will know that we are running an Easter school for Year 11 students between Tuesday 9 April and Friday 12 April. All year 11 students and their parents have been sent letters about the detail of this. You can find it on our website too.

Farewell

At the end of this term, we bid farewell to one of the Vice Principals, Mr Dhillon. He has been at the school for seven years and during this period has made a significant contribution to the leadership of Kings Norton and High and ARK Kings Academy. He will be missed as he moves on to take on ventures beyond Education.

Attendance

Next term we are starting a campaign to improve attendance in school. A few years ago I undertook research looking at the link between attainment and attendance at school. I found out that unless students were in school for at least 95% of the time they did not achieve the top grades in English and Mathematics.

Thank you to so many parents that work closely with us to make sure that your child does well. The very first thing you can do is to make sure that your child is in school on time every day. Of all students at ARK Kings 43 (11%) have not missed a day yet this year and 114 (35%) have attendance of 95% or more.

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 in a number of ways. Research into this shows 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 Principal, within the boundaries set by the Education Act 1996. 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, also if your child arrives at school after the close of registration. Leave in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

“Spot light on attendance” is an initiative designed to raise individual and overall school attendance by the use of legal action. Spotlight identifies students who have had 10 or more days of unauthorised absence and monitors them as part of an action group. Action group parents will receive another letter advising them about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.

Legal action that may be taken includes:

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) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, add costs and impose Parenting Orders.

Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence: Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Being taken to court could result in you having a criminal record.

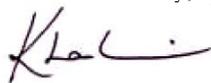
How does your child compare?

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

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life. If your child’s attendance for the last 12 calendar months was not satisfactory you need to take immediate action to give your child the best chance of success and avoid legal action

We will improve attendance by making it clear within the school and local community that unauthorised absence is not acceptable. You will be informed of the number of penalty notices issued, prosecutions and also of the percentage of improvement in attendance.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran Larkin
Principal