

12.01.24

St. Mary's

Church of England Primary School
Kirkby Lonsdale



Honesty



Trust



Responsibility



Perseverance



Respect



Spelling Bee – 29th January

I am thrilled to announce we are coming closer to the time when we hold our annual Spelling Bee. I am mindful that if anyone finds spelling tricky (including parents) this may not be immediately received with open arms. Of course, schools holding spelling bees do so to improve everyone's spelling ability and not just the best spellers. So I hope that everyone will make a great effort to embrace the sense of fun and purpose behind the Spelling Bee.

One of the fundamental building blocks of a solid education is a strong foundation in language skills. Learning spellings is an essential aspect of this foundation, contributing to improved reading, writing, and overall communication skills. Our annual Spelling Bee provides a unique platform and tradition for our students to hone their spelling abilities while engaging in a friendly and supportive environment.

We believe in the power of collaboration between school and home. The Spelling Bee presents a wonderful opportunity for families to come together and participate in the learning process. Encourage your children to share the excitement of preparing for the Spelling Bee with you, fostering a collaborative and supportive learning atmosphere at home. Whether children find spelling challenging or easy, this is a perfect opportunity to persevere and learn new spellings.

The anticipation and thrill of a Spelling Bee create a unique enthusiasm among the children. This event not only makes learning spellings enjoyable but also instils a sense of accomplishment and confidence as they successfully tackle challenging words. It's an experience that goes beyond the classroom, leaving a lasting positive impact on their attitude towards learning.

The beginning of the year is an opportune time to set ambitious learning goals. The Spelling Bee serves as a catalyst for our students to challenge themselves, enhancing their vocabulary and spelling proficiency. It's a fantastic way to kick-start the year with a commitment to academic excellence.

The Spelling Bee has a rich history of promoting academic achievement across the world and has been a driving force in developing language skills for generations. Beyond individual benefits, it fosters a sense of healthy competition, camaraderie, and a collective initiative toward academic excellence within the entire school.

Over the next few weeks we have the opportunity to learn spellings. These spellings are being distributed this week and should provide three weeks of learning spellings at home. Please find fun ways to learn the spellings, encouraging creative ways to learn these. The spelling bee will take place in the week beginning 29th January.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in shaping a bright future for our children.

Local Authority - Attendance Review

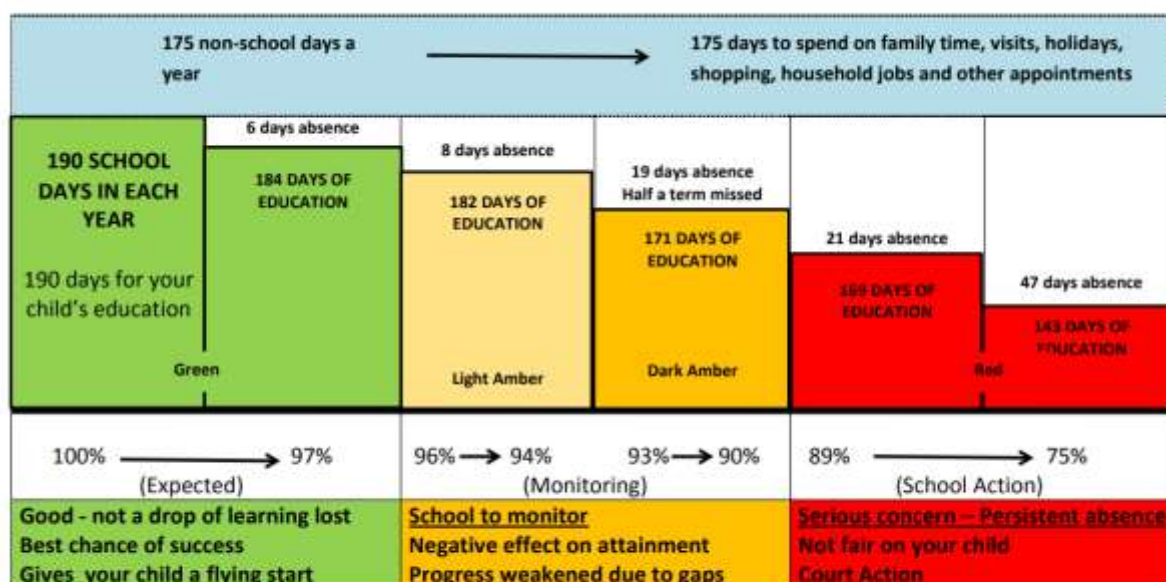
I am writing to all families following our attendance review with the Local Authority and prior to messaging or writing to families about their child's attendance. This subject can make parents bristle if their child's attendance is low and becomes irrelevant to families whose children have high attendance. Despite the emotions and feelings around this issue, it is a requirement of schools and the Headteacher to promote good attendance, challenge lower attendance and now, refer low attendance issues to the Local Authority to decide if a fine is required.

We understand that family time and holidays are precious, and the desire to take a break during term time is completely understandable eg with cost in mind. However, I would like to bring to your attention the challenges that irregular attendance poses to your child's education, both in the short and long term.

Proven Research – Does absence matter in Primary School?:

Research consistently shows that even missing a few days of school can have a significant impact on a child's academic progress. In the UK, the government has implemented measures locally and nationally to reduce absence and ensure that all children receive the education they deserve. (see the link below) The graphic below highlights the impact of ongoing absence which you may not have appreciated before. I should point out also that absence in primary schools is no different to that in secondary school. The impact developmentally and academically has long term effects and short term effects – we also share data with secondary schools about absence rates.

What percentage attendance means to your child in terms of lost learning



80% attendance over 5 years = 1 whole year of education lost.

Research suggests that pupils who have an average of 20 days absent per school year see negative effects throughout their educational journey – resulting in a whole GCSE grade deficit by the time they leave secondary education.

Article 28 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child : The right to learn and go to school

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When a child misses school, they miss out on valuable classroom instruction, discussions, and collaborative activities that contribute to their overall learning experience. Regular attendance is crucial for the continuous development of academic and social skills. It cannot be reiterated enough that the gaps in learning really do develop with even a short period of time.

Long-term absenteeism can result in substantial gaps in a child's knowledge, making it challenging for them to catch up with their peers. This may affect their confidence, motivation, and overall academic achievement. Consistent attendance, on the other hand, sets the foundation for a successful and fulfilling educational journey. The graphic above highlights that a Year gets missed over a five-year period if attendance is at 80%. That has a huge effect and is inevitably significant – a surprising, sobering but real statistic and reality.

Government Locally and Nationally

Both local and national governments have introduced initiatives to curb absenteeism and encourage regular attendance in schools. As part of these efforts, schools are required to report attendance figures, and high absence rates may lead to fines imposed by Local Authorities. Where a child is ill, whilst a valid reason, catching up and avoiding gaps in learning are important issues to discuss with parents and schools. Where a child is ill and a high absence rate and then a holiday is taken will also lead to a referral to the Local Authority. We urge parents to communicate openly with the school regarding any health issues to ensure that absences are appropriately recorded.

When attendance is near to or below 90%

Should attendance rates fall below the acceptable threshold, we are obligated to refer cases to the Local Authority. This is not a measure we take lightly, but it is essential to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential

While these measures may seem stringent, it is important to remember that they are in place to safeguard the educational experiences of all students. We appreciate the continued support from parents in acknowledging this shift and understanding the importance of regular attendance. This does require an adjustment in thinking for families used to taking regular yearly holidays in term time.

Being Late

Being late is also something that concerns the Government and Schools. We are going to be following up when children are consistently late for school as this has huge implications for a child settling and missing out. Please do everything in your power to ensure a positive routine in the morning so we can settle your child into school at the right time.

Being positive

Your child's education is a partnership between home and school, and we are committed to providing the best possible learning environment. Regular attendance is a key factor in

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achieving this goal. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain a high standard of education for all our students. If you have any concerns or questions regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. We value your partnership in your child's educational journey and look forward to a successful academic year.

Communicating with you

Inevitably, this is the time of year when we send a text as a reminder of your child's attendance so far – it will be coming in early January. This may be followed up with a personal letter/email where attendance is low. Parents value this as a reminder and we hope that where attendance is high that parents will praise and celebrate this. Where this is lower this provides an opportunity to discuss this, explore ways to ensure gaps in learning are addressed and hopefully, parents will consider ways to improve attendance.

We hope this won't be a source of contention, it is a reality and we hope, an opportunity to work together to support your child's education within the context in which we find ourselves.

Government and News Articles Highlighting the Government's Attendance Plans

- <http://tinyurl.com/27rpxac4>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/jan/09/labour-would-link-services-data-for-children-in-england-to-boost-standards>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/parents-pupil-absences-school-term-time-holiday-fine-a8833646.html>
- <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/education/schools-absence-covid-headteachers-warning-society-b1117318.html>

Young Carers

Each year, we are required to share data with the government as part of the school census; we have been asked to include young carers in this data collection.

It is acknowledged that 'young carers carry immense responsibility in providing care and support at home; but their own needs may remain 'hidden' from wider view. The increased pressures young carers have faced due to the pandemic has further highlighted the need to improve formal identification of this cohort in schools, understand their needs and to provide early help as outlined in statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education. Working together to safeguard children also outlines how school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need of early help for students who have taken on caring responsibilities.'

By definition, a young carer is: **someone under the age of 18 who looks after a family member or friend who has a physical or mental health condition or a family member who misuses drugs or alcohol. They may also look after brothers, sisters or elderly relatives too. They may do extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning or helping someone get dressed and move around.**

By telling us about your child's circumstances we will be better placed to support them. If your child is a young carer, please get in touch with the school office this week and notify us.

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Parent/carer workshops 2024



Run by Jemma Swales, local autism practitioner.

Are you a parent/carer of a young person (under 13) Who has recently been diagnosed as autistic? Or are they waiting for a diagnosis?

Autus are offering a course of 4 workshops for parents/carers of **young people under 13**.

Over the 4 sessions we will be focusing on:

- The key areas of autism and what they mean
- Understanding and supporting anxiety
- Difficulties at school/friendships
- Looking into reasons behind behaviour
- Managing emotions

If you are new to understanding autism, or you are needing some support helping your young person with anxiety, behaviours, friendships and more, this course is for you!

Info:

When: Wed 7th Feb
Wed 14th Feb
Wed 21st Feb
Wed 28th Feb
6.30pm-8.30pm

Where: Ulverston
Childrens Centre,
Lund Terrace

Cost: £40 for 4 sessions

To book a place email Bettina on:
jemaswalespa@outlook.com



Home Learning

You have hopefully received your child's Home Learning Projects Sheet for this half term. The final completion date is Friday 2nd Feb. We always look forward to seeing and hearing about the children's projects and how they have created them and what they have learned in the process.

Please ask the children about their projects in advance so they are prepared and ready. If you have any expertise or someone in your family is able to enhance the topics being studied, please do get in touch with the class teachers.

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District Finals

Well done to all of our children (within and not in these photos) who attended the District finals held at Sedbergh Prep, Casterton this week. What a great event and beautiful weather. Excellent individual and team effort. We are very proud of everyone who got stuck in and did their very best in their events. Thanks to everyone who supported and came to watch also!



Deadline for applications

Please note that if you, a friend or a family member wishes to apply, there are only a few days left.

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Dates for the Diary:

Jan 11 th	Cross Country at Sedbergh Prep – Pupils from Y3-6 representing
Jan 12 th	Maya online Lesson in Year 4
Jan 15 th	Yr 6 to meet with Baroness Thornton – Q&A about life as a Member of the House of Lords
Jan 17 th	Swimming to start for half of Y4 (other half to swim after half term) 8:40am depart.
Jan 24 th	Swimming Gala – Sedbergh Prep – Teams from Year Juniors to attend
Jan 26 th	Football Match – Holme vs St Mary's (after school)
Jan 29 th	Spelling Bee
Jan 30 th	Y6 to Visit Church – Eucharist
Jan 31 st	Y2 Class Worship in the Hall 14:40pm Parents are invited to come and see Y2
Feb 2 nd	Home Learning Projects to be handed in
Feb 5 th	Young Voices to Manchester
Feb 7 th	Y5 to Ingleton Climbing Wall (am) Y2/Y3 Gymnastics Team Competition (pm)
Feb 9 th	Sedbergh vs St Mary's - Football Match (TBC)

END of HALF TERM

Parents should get information very soon about the above events if they have not been informed yet, letters/emails will come soon.



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