

7th June, 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

As many of you know, the regular attendance and punctuality of all our children at The Orchard is very important to us.

Currently, due to the exceptional hard work of the Staff team, and the outstanding support of parents and carers in the children's learning journey, we judge most areas of our performance as a school as 'outstanding' and our **attendance** is now 95.8% as a result of this shared approach. We know that the majority of parents and carers share our belief that good attendance is vital, not only to the children's achievement and progress, but to their sense of belonging and their development as responsible, active members of society. We need your support and commitment to maintain attendance and punctuality at an outstanding level.

### **Why is attendance so important?**

Some parents argue that a holiday abroad during term time is just as educational as their child's schooling and do not feel it is as important to miss school at this stage of their education.

Firstly, in contrast, we feel that the children's infant education is the most important stage in establishing children's preparedness as future learners and responsible members of society. It is the time when children learn how to belong to a larger group of people, they learn routines and a commitment to shared expectations. They learn to value and respect other people and the rules which help us relate positively to one another and look after one another. Also, there are thirteen weeks of holiday when holidays can be taken outside of term time.

Secondly, there is a carefully planned and managed environment at The Orchard which promotes continuous learning and challenge. This is developed through first hand experiences and interaction between adults and children, and between the children themselves through facilitated discussion, practical problem solving and investigation. Much of our success at The Orchard, which ensures progress for every child, stems from the staff and children's talk. Each lesson builds on previous lessons and within each lesson teachers refine their teaching to challenge and extend learners in response to what they are saying and doing. This learning cannot be recreated or 'caught up' on outside of the classroom or on another day.

Children who miss school will miss hundreds of opportunities for learning and a sense of their own progress and achievement. During a week of absence from school, a child will miss the introduction of several new concepts and skills so that s/he is at a disadvantage in their learning and understanding. Teachers cannot revisit teaching as the timetable is very full. There are key elements of the curriculum which are assessed in the final week of each half term. If one standard is not met a child cannot meet end of year expectations.

Children will also miss the vital social interaction and shared community with their peers. The other children will also miss **their** contribution.

### What is the school doing about attendance?

1. At The Orchard teachers plan a stimulating curriculum to ensure children feel excited and enthused about learning. The staff plan themes which involve practical experiences, visitors and fun days at the beginning, during and at the end of a topic. They plan 'wow' moments on the first day and last day of a half term. They want to make sure 'every second counts'.
2. Teachers assess individual children very carefully throughout the year. In addition, the final week of each half term is focussed on assessment and target setting. On the final day of each half term vital information regarding your child's next steps and homework targets are sent home.
3. Our circle times, assemblies, 5R's and on-going behaviour management all reinforce the children's learning that each one of them is an important member of our school community. We teach the children to value themselves and others and to meet our high expectations of their behaviour and learning. Assemblies will also celebrate and reward good attendance encouraging whole school and class achievement.
4. Mrs. Cary regularly reminds families about the importance of attendance through newsletters and half termly individual attendance reports for parents.
5. Mrs. Cary meets with families where a child's attendance or punctuality is below average and causing concern. Families are referred to the Education Welfare Service when there is no improvement. The Education Welfare Service will also be supporting the school through being on "late" gate duty and talking to parents/carers arriving late.
6. In conjunction with the Headteachers of the Esher, Cobham and Molesey cluster of schools there is a shared policy and process to communicate and enforce shared expectations for attendance and punctuality. All local schools apply the same rules.
7. The Governors, Mrs. Cary, Staff and the Education Welfare Service will continue to monitor the children's attendance and punctuality closely. Holiday absence will not be authorised. Sickness absence of five days or more must be supported by a doctor's letter. Each family is sent attendance data every half term so that you are aware of your own child's record.
8. The Governors at The Orchard use their power to fine parents when there is unauthorised absence. Details of the use of fixed penalty notices and the procedure for applying these are included in the Attendance Policy. This is a decision which has not been taken lightly and is consistent with other local schools where penalty notices are also being used.
9. We will continue to encourage your involvement as parents and carers and seek your ideas to help us to ensure good attendance.
10. Please read our latest Attendance Policy on our website.

We thank every parent and carer who supports and contributes to our 'outstanding' provision at The Orchard and appreciate your commitment in helping us to improve our provision even further in this way.

Yours sincerely,



**Mark Waters**  
Chair of Governors



Sally J Cary  
Head Teacher