



MTA/SB  
October 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Re: Attendance – Persistent Absence**

The pupils of this school are justifiably proud of their attendance records over the last few years. They realise that good attendance is essential for genuine learning to take place, to provide a platform for progress in all subject areas. Less than 5% of Freeston Students were Persistent Absent during 2007-2008 on of the best records in Wakefield.

There are, however, a small minority of pupils who take up a great deal of school time with unnecessary absence and the government is determined to tackle this problem. Pupils who drift in and out of the education system need work explained to them over and over again in lessons; time that should be used to help those who attend regularly to progress.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has set targets for individual students who are persistently absent by half-term period. For the first Half-term the threshold is 14 sessions (7 days) and for the first and second Half-term it is a total of 28 sessions (14 days). The school will contact parents of children who are persistently absent by this criteria.

One of initiatives the school will use is called 'Fast-track'. This is not intended to cause concern to any parent whose child is genuinely ill and unable to come to school. It will target parents who knowingly keep their children off school for no good reason and results in a speedy prosecution and heavy fine if the case against them is proven.

I hope that you will support the school in our partnership with the Education Welfare Service to ensure that pupils who truant are dealt with appropriately. Similarly, we do of course recommend that pupils do not take holidays in term time. Any parents who do so must write to Mrs Metcalfe prior to the holiday seeking approval for the absence. This will enable the school to monitor the number of days taken for this purpose. We are particularly concerned with the SAT time in early May for Year 9 and the GCSE period for Year 11.

The vast majority of our pupils need not be concerned by news of fast-track sanctions for non-attendance. However, please make sure that you contact the school to explain any absence. When parents state that persistent irregular attendance is due to medical reasons, this must be supported by a medical certificate or a letter from hospital confirming why your child will be regularly absent.

The school is committed to ensuring that the needs of the majority of well behaved; well attended pupils are met in full.

**The Year 11 trial exams start Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and end on the last day of the Autumn Term which is 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008, when the school closes for Christmas.**

Yours sincerely

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Director of Student Services

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