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| Attendance Policy | Communicating Love; Inspiring our Community to Flourish**2020-2021** Written: September 2020Review: September 2021 |

Aims

• To emphasise the importance of, and secure from children, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;

• To make explicit to all relevant parties the school’s expectations over attendance levels;

• To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;

• To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;

• To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/guardians, children) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised" or “unauthorised”;

• To emphasise the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

• To communicate the approach for supporting children who cannot attend because of health needs.

• To define procedures for pupils missing Education.

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# Introduction

Regular attendance at school is vital. Absence is detrimental to the learning process. It is a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important learning; it also places children at risk, isolates and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our children.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

# The National Perspective

The Department for Education states that ‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less’.

The government expects schools to:

• promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence

• Ensure every pupil has access to a full time education to which they are entitled

• Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expect parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school attend regularly and for all pupils to be punctual.

As of September 2015 the Persistent Absence threshold has been 10%. This was set by the Department for Education. **This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil. If attendance fails to improve during a monitoring period, the case may be referred to Warwickshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued to parents/carers. These Penalty Notices currently stand at £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.**

# Our School Target

Our target for all pupils is an attendance of over 96% throughout the year. Regular absences are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school. Whilst sickness is impossible to predict, it is likely that the vast majority of pupils are able to achieve this target (less than eight days absence across the year.)

# Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parent or carer), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which would not be considered reasonable under the Department for Education’s guidance. Unauthorised absence includes:

* Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
* Truancy before or during the school day.
* Absences which have not been properly explained.
* Children who arrive at school after the close of registration without a valid reason (Please see **Punctuality** guidance below).
* Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
* Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the school. (Please see **Holidays in Term Time** guidance below).

# Authorised Absences

Authorised absences include those where:

• A child is ill or receiving medical attention

• A child is displaying COVIS-19 symptoms, is in isolation or quarantining

• Approved sporting activity

• Approved interview or visit to another school

• Religious Observance

• Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances – agreed by the Headteacher

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

# Sickness

Not every illness needs to keep a child away from school. Asking these questions may help parents when deciding whether or not their child should attend school.

• Is your child well enough to do the activities of the school day? If not, keep your child at home.

• Does your child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? If so, keep your child at home.

• Would you take a day off work if you had this condition? If so, keep your child at home.

Public Health England provides guidance for all schools and child care settings.

St Gabriel’s follows this PHE guidance in relation to the absence period following an incidence of sickness or diarrhoea. Therefore, children must not return to school until 48 hours from last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting have elapsed.

A child’s health is of paramount importance to us all and we must do all that we can to ensure that illness does not spread to other children and staff.

There are specific guidelines issued by central government to limit the spread of infection of COVID-19 during the worldwide pandemic and these must be adhered to when considering attendance.

# Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

• No explanation is provided by parent (s)/carers by 9.30am on the day of the absence;

• An explanation is received before 9.30am on the day of the absence but does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The Government guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not.

In some circumstances, unauthorised absence can result in a Penalty Notice being applied (£60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. After this time legal action may be taken). The decision to issue a Penalty Notice is the Headteacher’s. Penalty Notices are administered by the County Council Education Welfare Officer

# Persistent Absenteeism

A child is identified as a ‘persistent absentee (PA)’ once they have missed 10% of their own possible sessions. Therefore, all children with attendance below 90% are classed as PA.

Absence at this level may do considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and lessons missed cannot be repeated and ‘catching up’ on work is never as good as the original learning experience; therefore, we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence level, or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and parents/carers will be informed.

Children who are identified as PA are tracked and monitored by class teachers and parents/carers are advised of how such levels of absence will affect their child’s attainment.

If measures put in place by the school fail to improve the child’s attendance, then the case could be reported to **Warwickshire Attendance Service** (see below). Persistent unauthorised absences could lead to Warwickshire County Council using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

# Leave of Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where this is the case, head teachers should determine the number of school days a child is granted leave.

To apply for Leave of Absence, parents should put all requests in writing to the Headteacher in advance of the leave.

‘Leave of Absence Requests’ for exceptional circumstances will be considered by the Headteacher in line with this policy and a letter will be returned advising parents of their decision.

# Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

• Do all they can to ensure their child arrives on time. The school day begins at 8.45 am.

• Notify the school by 9.00am on the first day if their child is unwell with details of the illness and an estimation of the likely length of absence; the school should be notified every day of a child’s absence

• Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's motivation to attend school.

In return the school will:

• Contact home on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received from home and on subsequent days if the child does not return as expected;

• Contact home over any unexplained absences by 9.30am going through the parental priority list as advised by parents at time of enrolment;

• Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on that may be affecting their child’s attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;

• Involve staff and outside agencies to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;

# Reporting

Attendance is included in the termly report issued to parents and discussed at termly parent consultation meetings.

Attendance is reported and discussed at every governing body meeting.

Attendance is reported through the school census each year.

# The Process of Recording & Monitoring Absences

• Electronic registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions by teaching staff. Where a reason for an absence has not been provided, the absence will be recorded as ‘N’.

• The school expects parents and carers to contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of absence (and on subsequent days if the child’s expected return is delayed) to account for their child’s absence; this does not need to be supported by a letter. Where an absence has not been explained the absence will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’.

• If no contact is made, the school office will contact parents by 9.30am to determine the reason for the absence and to be satisfied the child is accounted for.

• The school attendance lead and Senior Leadership Team will review attendance once per half term highlighting where attendance has fallen below 96% or where there has been a pattern of absence or lateness.

• The school attendance lead will write a letter to all families once per half term with an attendance figure for the half term.

• Families with pupils above 96% attendance will be thanked for their partnership in achieving this.

• Pupils with 100% attendance will have an additional text message sent home thanking them.

• Families with pupils whose attendance has fallen below 96% or where there has been a pattern of absence or lateness, will be reminded of the importance of attendance and punctuality and set a target of improved attendance for the following half term.

• Families with pupils whose attendance is below 90% will be sent a persistent absentee letter highlighting the seriousness of low attendance and requesting a meeting to discuss improvement.

• If, within a reasonable margin, improved attendance is not achieved during the next half term, the Headteacher will contact the parent in writing to review the case.

• Cases which do not show improvement will be discussed with Warwickshire Attendance service.

• The attendance lead will meet with the Warwickshire Attendance Service on a termly basis.

• For pupils whose attendance is 90% and below due to unauthorised attendance over a period of time, a referral will be considered with Warwickshire Attendance Service.

• Where a child is transferring to another school, their attendance record will be shared with new school.

# Lateness

Lateness is reviewed regularly alongside attendance.

Where regular lateness is evident and causes a concern, the school procedure is:

1) Class teacher to speak with parent.

2) If lateness does not improve over the next 2 school weeks, the attendance lead will speak with the parents and set a target.

3) If the target is not achieved, within a reasonable margin, the Headteacher will contact the parent in writing requesting a meeting to identify issues, set a target and next steps.

4) If the target is not achieved, within a reasonable margin, the attendance lead will discuss the case with Warwickshire Attendance Service

The above actions will be recorded on the central system operated by the office.

# Registration Procedures

Each day children should be ready to come into school at 8.45 a.m. when the classroom doors/Reception playground gate are opened by the class teacher/TA.

These doors will close promptly at 9am

An electronic register is completed by each class teacher on a daily basis at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The class teacher will take the register at 9:05am and again at 1:30pm.

All children who arrive at school after 9am must report to the front office where they will be marked as late with an ‘L’ code.

Expected absences would show as the appropriate code on the electronic register.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of any child, including a child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. As a result, the school will make swift arrangements to contact the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Children arriving and leaving school with a parent/carer during normal school hours are signed in or out from the school office. The Entry Sign system is used for this purpose and it then provides a record in the case of an emergency/drill.

# Procedure for Administration Team

Parents are expected to email or telephone the school by 9.00am on the morning of the day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason. These absences are recorded on Scholarpack. Should School not receive communication by 9:30am the team will contact home on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received from home and on subsequent days if the child does not return as expected. Contact home over any unexplained absences will be through the parental priority list as advised by parents at time of enrolment.

When established, the reasons provided for any absence will be recorded on Pupil Asset. Any ‘N’ codes will be updated to show the appropriate code for the absence.

The most common codes (other than the late codes referred to above) are:

C (Exceptional Circumstances)

G (Unauthorised Holiday)

H (authorised holiday)

I (Illness/ recuperation from an operation)

L late (before registers close)

M (Medical/dental appointment)

O (Unauthorised absence)

P (approved sporting activity)

R (absence due to religious observance)

U late (after registers close)

V (School trip / visit)

X – (child not required to be in school) (absence relating to Coronavirus)\*

Y (Forced and Partial Closure – school office only)

# (schools closed to pupils – school office only)

The electronic registers remain accessible via Scholarpack and letters explaining absence filed in the child’s school file.

\*not counted as absence in school census

# School refusal

There are occasions where children find it hard to come into school for a variety of reasons. School anxiety is commonly experienced by pupils of all ages and can be particularly observed after holiday breaks, weekends or special events. Reassurance is usually sufficient to support this. In some cases, extreme fear and anxiety can lead to a complete refusal to attend school.

Overwhelming anxiety may be as a result of concerns about:

* Schoolwork
* Relationships
* Bullying
* Low self-esteem
* Life changes
* Family breakdown
* Mental illness
* Bereavement

Children can worry about what is happening in school, or what might happen at home while they are in school.

School refusal can be accompanied by tantrums, physical complaints such as stomach aches, vomiting, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, pleading or begging to stay at home or even threatening to harm themselves if they are forced to go to school.

# What to do if a child is refusing school

Where a child is refusing school attendance, the aim is to tackle the issue as early as possible. Any school missed due to anxiety is likely to lead to greater difficulties in the future. The longer it persists the deeper it becomes.

* Parents should be supported to seek professional help, through counselling or mental health services, and this should be undertaken as a priority.
* Try to ascertain exactly what is causing the anxiety, a worry box and 1:1 conversations may help this.
* A meeting with school and parents should be arranged to agree to working together to support the child’s attendance, focusing on causes of anxiety.
* Discuss school support with mentoring, flexible start times and/or temporary reduced timetable.
* Consider implementing a home-school communication book.
* Refer to school nursing team to undertake anxiety support

Supporting the medical condition may require a health plan to be drawn up in consultation with medical professionals, parents and the school.

The charity young minds offer parental advice.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-refusal/>

<http://theconversation.com/so-your-child-refuses-to-go-to-school-heres-how-to-respond-98935>

# Supporting attendance for pupils with medical conditions

The school will support pupils with medical conditions (including mental health) to attend school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy, and achieve their academic potential. See separate policy.

# Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend due to health needs

In some cases, a child cannot attend school on a long-term basis due to health problems. In this case the local authority is responsible for arranging suitable, full-time alternative provision of a good quality on a par with that they would receive in a mainstream setting. Warwickshire Local authority offer ‘flex-learning’. A pupil may be referred to ‘flex’ with parental consent when it becomes apparent the child will be absent from school for a period of more than fifteen consecutive days.

For school attendance records, pupils should be coded as ‘I’ ill, during the period of required support, with a ‘B’ code used only where education sessions have taken place with the Flexible Learning Team or in Alternative Provision.

Individual reintegration plans will be designed to take account of need when the child is ready, some will be able to return to the school routine at once where others will require a gradual integration over a longer period. Reintegration plans may only take shape near to the likely date of return.

# Children missing education

 Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

The school will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child’s whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

 The School will monitor pupils’ attendance through their daily register. The school will inform the local authority of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

The School will notify the local authority when a pupil’s name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil’s name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply at standard transition points – where the pupil has completed the school’s final year – unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

The school will provide the local authority with:

a. the full name of the pupil;

b. the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;

c. at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives;

d. the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;

e. the name of pupil’s destination school and the pupil’s expected start date there, if applicable; and

f. the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil’s name is to be removed from the admission register.

The school will notify the local authority within five days when a pupil’s name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point and provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil’s name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the local authority and the school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

a. make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;

b. check local databases within the local authority;

c. check Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems;

d. follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children’s social care, and HMRC;

e. check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;

f. check with agencies known to be involved with family;

g. check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known; h. check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;

i. check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;

j. in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and

k. home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

# Appendices – Letter 1

 26 February 2021

Dear

**Re: Insert name**

**Insert name** ’s attendance is currently **insert percentage** % which is below the school’s target of 96**%** and I am sure that this is as much a concern for you as it is for us.

An attendance of 90% or less is recognised as Persistently Absent (PA) and equates to an average of one school day missed per fortnight, which can have a big impact on pupils’ learning.

There are of course many reasons (such as illness), which can make attendance at school difficult. Unfortunately, missed lessons cannot be repeated and catching up on work is not as effective as the original learning experience. Children who have regular and/or prolonged absences from school will find it more difficult in the long term from gaps in their learning.

I would urge you to ensure **insert name** attends every possible day that they can and value your support in this matter. If you would like to discuss any concerns you have regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

Headteacher

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# Appendices – Letter 2

Dear «salutation»

**Re:** «**forename**»«**surname**»**,** «**year/reg**»

With reference to the letter dated **INSERT DATE,** I have reviewed «Forename»’s attendance and unfortunately there has not been a sustained improvement in «his/her»’sattendance which is currently «percentage attendance»%.

We will continue to monitor «Forename»’s attendance over the next 4 weeks. If there has not been a significant improvement during this time, we will invite you to a meeting to discuss how we can work together to support «Forename»in achieving an improvement.

As you are aware attendance of 90% is now recognised as Persistently Absent and equates to an average of one school day missed per fortnight and an attendance of 80% equates to an average on one day missed per week. As you know in order to enable «Forename»to reach their full potential «he/she» must have high attendance and good punctuality at school.

***I have to advise you as a parent/carer of a child of statutory school age, you have a legal responsibility to ensure full time education through regular attendance at school or otherwise (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996)***

If you require any further clarification regarding school attendance, please read our Attendance policy which is available on the school’s websiteand if you would like to discuss the reasons for your child’s absence please contact me on 01788 222405**.**

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

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# Appendices – Letter 3

Dear «salutation»

**Re:** «**forename**»«**surname**»**,** «**year/reg**»

Please find enclosed a copy of «forename»’s Attendance Certificate. «Forename»’s attendance is currently «percentage attendance»% which has not shown a sustained improvement since our letter dated **INSERT DATE** and therefore remains a concern.

An appointment has been made for you to discuss your child’s attendance concerns on **DATE** at **TIME** with myself. Please let school know if this is not convenient and a mutually agreeable appointment will be arranged. If you do not attend the agreed meeting, a target may be set in your absence.

It is the Head Teacher’s decision to authorise any absence based on the information provided by parents. I must inform you that further absences may ***not be authorised*** unless evidence is provided. In the case of illness, the school will accept the following as proof: medical appointment card/letter; proof of a prescription (medicine/tablets label/container) showing the date prescribed. In addition to this, a referral to the School Health and Wellbeing service can be completed if you feel that this would be of benefit to your child.

***The school would like to remind you that in line with Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, as a parent/carer of a child of statutory school age, you have a legal responsibility to ensure full time education through regular attendance at school or otherwise.*** Failure to do so may result in a referral to the Local Authority’s, Attendance Compliance and Enforcement Service.

If you require any further clarification regarding school attendance, please read our Attendance policy which is available on the school’s websiteand if you would like to discuss the reasons for your child’s absence please contact me on 01788 222405**.**

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

Headteacher

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# Appendices – lateness letter

 26 February 2021

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

**Re: Lateness**

I am writing to advise you that this term, <insert child’s name> has been late on \_\_\_\_ occasions and missed \_\_\_\_ minutes of education.

Essential instructions are given out at the beginning of lessons and when pupils arrive late, they miss out on this important information.

Children can also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled and when one pupil arrives late, it is disruptive for the entire class.

I appreciate that there can be genuine reasons for a child being late on the odd occasion but I would urge you to ensure «forename» arrives punctually at school on a regular basis, this may mean giving yourselves an extra 15 minutes in your journey time.

If you would like to discuss any concerns you have regarding punctuality, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor Headteacher

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# Appendices – improving attendance letter 1

 26 February 2021

Dear

**Re: insert name, insert year**

You may remember we wrote to you on **insert date** with regards to **insert name**’s attendance.

I am pleased to say that their attendance has improved and has increased from **insert old percentage**% to **insert new percentage**%. Well done and please continue to encourage **insert name** to reach our individual attendance target of 96%.

I value your support in this matter and if you would like to discuss any concerns you have regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

Headteacher



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# Appendices – improving attendance letter 2

 26 February 2021

Dear

**Re: insert name, insert class,**

You may remember I spoke to you previously with regards to **insert name**’s attendance.

I am pleased to say that their attendance has improved from **insert old percentage**% but I need to make you aware that it is still below 90% and currently stands at **insert new percentage**%. Please continue to encourage them to reach our target of 96%.

I value your support in this matter but if you would like to discuss any concerns you have regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

Headteacher



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# Appendices – improving attendance letter 3

 26 February 2021

Dear

**Re: Insert name, insert class**

**Insert name**’s attendance is currently **insert percentage**% which is an improvement on last term’s attendance but still below the school’s target of 96%.

Thank you for understanding the importance of making sure **insert name** is in school and I would urge you to ensure they attends every day that she can so that her attendance record can continue to improve.

 I value your support in this matter but if you would like to discuss any concerns you have regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. Taylor

Headteacher



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