

Our Ref : SPP/JET
12 February 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

Punctuality to school and amendment to the BfL system

I am writing to you to ask for your support in ensuring that every child in our school is maximising their potential and is taking every opportunity to embrace the learning opportunities available to them at All Saints.

Any of you who have heard me speak publicly to parents and students since my appointment in September, will, I hope, have no doubt how extremely proud I am of our students. They really are a credit to you and our school community. Every one of them deserves nothing less than an excellent educational experience and that is what we strive for together. However, one significant concern I have and recognise as a barrier to this aim for excellence is the **poor punctuality of some students to school in the morning**. We are working hard to improve this area of school but can only succeed with the support of families working in partnership with us. At this point, I want to emphasise the fact that the vast majority of our students arrive on time to school every day and therefore you will be understandably reading this appeal confident that it does not apply to your son or daughter. However, I want to address the whole school community with my concerns and share my views on the issue.

I have begun many of my days with the Attendance Team as they carry out their procedures for students arriving to school as well as carried out analysis of the number of recorded late arrivals to school since the start of the academic year. **Between 5 September and 31 January we issued 2663 'Punctuality Slips' for students arriving after 8:30 am.** We feel that this number is unacceptable. Learning in lessons actually begins at 8:30 am. A significant number of students, across all year groups, are cumulatively missing hours of learning due to late arrival to school. For these students, there is no doubt that this is having a significant detrimental effect on their education.

I also look closely at the reasons students provide for being persistently late to school. The three most common reasons are 'got up late', 'traffic was bad' and 'missed or late bus/tram'. I appreciate that when either being driven to school or relying on public transport, there can be incidents, on occasion, that disrupt journeys. However, hundreds of our students travel to school by car, bus or tram and the vast majority organise their time efficiently so as to be punctual and never arrive late to school. This is what we require from all our students. 'Getting up late' can never be an acceptable reason for arriving late to school and yet, from a number of students, we are hearing this several times a week. In order to explore further the link between journey to school and punctuality I asked our Attendance Team to break down the number of late arrivals by postcode. Our student population covers 17 Sheffield postcodes. I was dismayed to discover that of those 2663 recorded late arrivals almost a third were from the S2 postcode which is the school's actual locality. Therefore, these are students who, for the most part, walk to school.

Let me emphasise that we will always appreciate the odd occasion where circumstances dictate a late arrival. However, **we have too many students for whom lateness to school**

is habitual and happening as a matter of routine. This has to improve as the negative impact on their learning is significant. As lessons start at 8:30 am **I believe every student should be aiming to arrive within a window between 8:05 and 8:20 am, with 8:20 being the latest, thus affording students time to arrive on site, get to their classroom and settle to prepare for learning.** If a student arrives between 8:25 am and 8:30 am, whilst on time to school premises, they are not necessarily going to be on time to Period 1.

Currently, if a student arrives at 8:30 they are issued with a 'non culpable' slip which means their teacher, when they arrive to the lesson, will excuse their lateness. I intend to end this system as I believe it gives students the message that as long as they arrive at school for 8:30 am it is ok to arrive to their lesson a few minutes late. This is clearly not acceptable and indeed is not in line with our Behaviour for Learning system on punctuality between lessons and social time.

The vast majority of students who regularly arrive late to school are, on average, between 3 and 5 minutes late. I am certain that, with the right frame of mind, these students can organise their time so as to arrive 5-10 minutes earlier to school. This may be getting out of bed earlier, setting off in the car earlier or catching a slightly earlier tram or bus. Therefore, any student arriving to school at 8:30 am, who will subsequently be late for lesson, will be issued a late caution. **This change to the punctuality system will be implemented when we return back after the February half term.** As with any amendments to our Behaviour for Learning policy students will be given one week's trial whereby sanctions will be issued, without being served, to indicate to students that they have triggered the system.

We will, of course, listen to and be understanding of legitimate reasons for unprecedented lateness, which by their very nature are rare. I aim to address what I have referred to as **habitual lateness.** Where necessary, those students who are **regularly** late will be asked to report to me for an interview to explain their frequent lateness. If, after this interview, there is no marked improvement I will ask parents/carers to attend a meeting in school so that we can work together to remedy the situation. The sole reason behind this push on improving punctuality is to ensure that your child receives the best quality education and does not miss any opportunity to fulfil their true potential.

I thank the vast majority of students and their families for ensuring that they arrive to school on time each day and I hope you understand why I want to address these concerns and quest for improvement with the whole school community. If, however, you recognise that there have been concerns over your child's punctuality please engage in conversation with them, share this letter with them and emphasise the importance of arriving to school and lessons on time every day. I am confident we can and will significantly improve our students' punctuality to school, but only if school and home work in partnership together. As always, I thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



S P Pender
Headteacher