

4th September 2026

Dear Families,

I hope you have had a wonderful summer break and enjoyed the opportunity to rest, recharge and spend time together. It has been a pleasure welcoming the whole school community back to Altwood this morning, and I am excited about the year ahead.

As we begin the new academic year, I would like to remind families to inform the school office as soon as possible of any changes in circumstances, contact details, medical information or other matters that may affect your child. Keeping us updated helps us provide the very best support and ensures we can work together effectively throughout the year.

It was lovely to welcome our new Year 7 and Year 12 students back to school yesterday. They had a fantastic first day and quickly demonstrated the enthusiasm, positivity and ambition that make Altwood such a special place. We are delighted to welcome new families into our community, whilst also continuing the strong relationships we have built with families whose children have chosen to continue their journey with us in our Sixth Form.

At Altwood, we are much more than a school; we are a family and a community. Everything we do is guided by our vision and values:

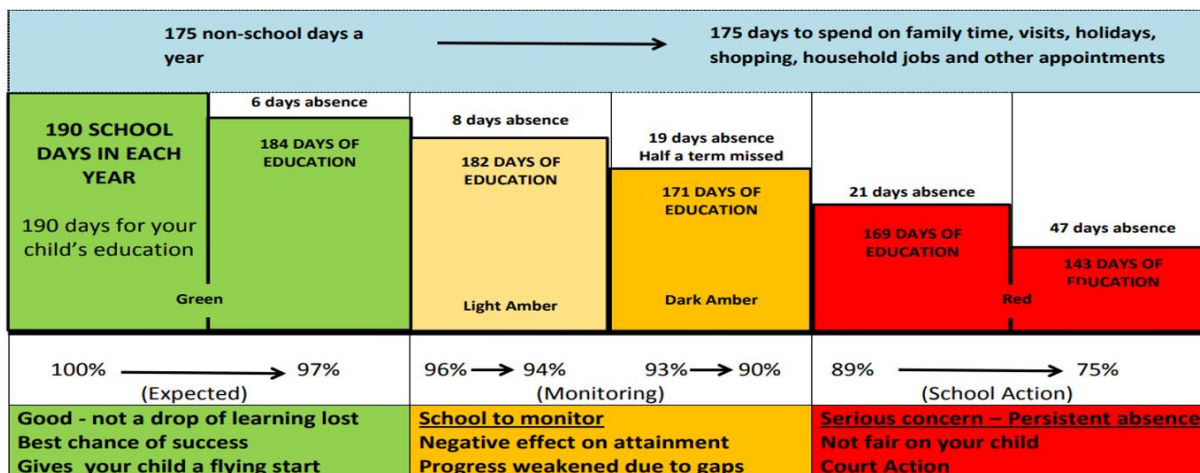
We are known. We are valued. We will succeed.

Success looks different for every child. We firmly believe that every student is running their own race, with their own strengths, aspirations and challenges. Our role is to help each young person achieve their personal best, whatever that may look like. If your child requires any additional support, whether academic, pastoral or emotional, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are committed to working alongside families to ensure every student can thrive.

Just a reminder that we continue to have very high expectations in terms of school uniform and will be contacting home about any issues over the coming days. Skirts must be finger-tip length and so some students will need to purchase new skirts if they have grown over the summer and skirts are now too short. Can I also remind you that leggings are not permitted to be worn as school trousers and that false nails need to be removed to meet our H&S rules for practical subjects like PE, Tech, Science and Art.

A key factor in ensuring success is **excellent attendance**. Every lesson matters, and every day in school makes a difference. Missing just **one day of school every fortnight** can result in attendance falling below **90% across the academic year**, equivalent to **more than 100 hours of lost learning**. As the attendance information shared below demonstrates, even seemingly small amounts of absence can have a significant impact on a child's education and progress.

If your child has a medical/dental appointment, the expectation is that they will attend school before and after the appointment and proof of the appointment must be provided in advance.



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.

Research consistently shows that high attendance is linked to higher attainment, stronger wellbeing and better future opportunities. We therefore ask all families to support us by ensuring that students attend school every day, arrive on time and only miss school when absolutely necessary.

As we begin this new academic year together, I am incredibly optimistic about what we can achieve as a community. I look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure a smooth, successful and rewarding year for every child. Thank you for your continued support, trust and commitment to Altwood.

Together, we will ensure that every student is known, valued and able to succeed.

With best wishes for the year ahead,

Cath Harden



Mrs Cath Harden
Headteacher