Outwood Academy Acklam
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Head of School: Mr Chris Palmer

Dear Parents and Carers,

As the colder months approach, we often see an increase in common illnesses such as colds, coughs, and flu. To help keep our children healthy and reduce the spread of germs, we'd like to share a few simple but effective ways to prevent illness this winter.

1. Encourage good hand hygiene:
Regular handwashing with soap and warm water, especially before eating and after using the toilet. This is one of the most effective ways to stop germs from spreading.

2. Teach children to catch coughs and sneezes:
Please remind your child to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of their elbow when they cough or sneeze, and to dispose of tissues immediately.

3. Keep warm and well-fed:
Ensure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and eats a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables to support their immune system.

4. Rest, recovery, and school attendance:
It's normal for children to feel a little tired or under the weather during the winter months. Whenever possible, we encourage children to attend school, even if they have mild symptoms such as a slight cough or cold. Attending regularly helps them maintain routines, continue learning, and stay connected with friends. However, if your child is severely unwell, for example, has a very high temperature, is vomiting regularly, or is too ill to take part in normal school activities then they should remain at home. At this stage, medical advice should be considered and contact should be made with the child's GP or local walk-in service so effective treatment can be administered.

5. Reporting absences:
If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or a medical appointment, it's important that you notify the school as soon as possible, ideally on the first day of absence. Where possible, please provide evidence for all absences. You can provide appointment cards, medical notes, or other relevant documentation, so we can accurately record attendance.

6. Flu vaccinations:
The NHS recommends flu vaccinations for eligible children. If your child is eligible, please contact your GP to arrange the vaccination.

7. Supporting good attendance:
We understand that maintaining regular attendance can sometimes be challenging. Our school offers pastoral and academic support to help children attend regularly, including:

- Guidance and support from Personal Development Mentors to address any wellbeing or personal challenges.

- Assistance from Learning Managers to provide strategies for managing study routines and school commitments.

- Engagement with Leadership Links for additional guidance and encouragement.

- Flexible arrangements for medical appointments where possible.

- Regular updates and communication about your child's attendance.

8. Attendance expectations (DfE) and legal responsibilities:
The Department for Education (DfE) expects all children to attend school regularly and aims for every child to achieve at least **96% attendance** or higher. All schools monitor attendance using DfE bandings. A basic outline is displayed below:

- **Green (Good Attendance):** 96% – 100%

- **Amber (Cause for Concern):** 91% – 95%

- **Red (Persistent Absence):** 90% and below

Children who fall below 90% attendance are classified as persistently absent, which can significantly affect their learning progress, social development, and wellbeing. Please be aware that persistent unauthorised absence may lead to fines or legal action under DfE guidance.

Our school is committed to working closely with families to prevent these legal processes from needing to happen. By providing support, guidance, and early intervention, we aim to ensure all children can achieve good attendance while avoiding unnecessary penalties, by putting students and families first.

Warm regards,
Mr Marron

Assistant Principal