



1st February 2010

Dear Parents / Carer

Important information regarding communication between school and home

Next Monday we will be launching a two-month trial of a new system for communicating with parents and carers. This is a text message and e-mail based system provided through "Keep Kids Safe" and will, we believe, further improve communication between school and home. It will also serve to strengthen our safeguarding procedures. We will review this trial period at Easter, and evaluate the benefits in terms of improved communication, time efficiency and cost effectiveness, with a view to implementing the system on a long term basis.

To maximise the efficiency of this new system I would appreciate you taking a few minutes to read the following information carefully.

Text messaging

At midday on Thursday 28th January 2010 a "test text message" was sent to the parent/carer who you have identified as your "Priority 1" contact on the recent data checking sheet. If you did **not** receive this message, or it was not sent to your preferred number, please contact school as soon as possible so that this can be amended on our database.

E-mail

At the same time last Thursday, a duplicate of the message was sent as a "test e-mail" to the e-mail address of the parent/carer who you have identified as "Priority 1". If you did not receive this e-mail, this is because we do not have an e-mail address for you. If you wish to provide one, please complete and return the reply slip below by the end of this week. This is optional.

Student absence

From Monday 8th February 2010, we are introducing the following system for reporting student absence:

1. If at all possible, please inform us **before 8.30am** if your child will be absent from school. You can do this by:
 - calling the normal Student Absence line (see below)
 - sending a text message (see below)
 - using a new automated voice message service (see below).

Please note that **text messages will only be accepted from the mobile phone number registered as "Priority 1"** on our database (i.e. the number to which the test message was sent). In order to ensure that all messages that we receive are genuine, we will not accept messages sent from any other number.

2. If your child is marked as absent but we have not received notification from you, we will aim to send a text message to your "Priority 1" number by the end of the first lesson (9.45am). You will then have the option to reply by text message, or to call an automated voice message service and leave details. To ensure that the message you receive is genuine, please check that it has been sent from the mobile phone number below. Currently alerts of this type will not be sent to Year 13 students, where variable timetables may apply.
3. If you have also provided an e-mail address for your "Priority 1" contact, you will simultaneously receive a duplicate message by e-mail. However, please do **not** reply by e-mail, but use one of the three options shown below.
4. If the number you have given us as "Priority 1" is a landline phone, you will receive the message as a "voice text". In this case you will not be able to reply by text message, as your phone will not have this facility.
5. On your child's return to school, please ensure that you have authenticated the absence message by signing in the Student Planner on the appropriate page as usual.

To report your child's absence please use one of these three methods of contacting school. Please do **not** use e-mail for reporting absence.

- Call the Student Absence line on **01943 855 682**
- Send a text message to **07624 813 300**
- Call the automated voice message service on **0844 239 3324** (local call rate)

**These are dedicated STUDENT ABSENCE reporting numbers.
Please do not use for any other purpose**

Other services

The new system will also have other uses, such as enabling us to contact all parents and carers almost simultaneously in cases of emergency school closure. We are also exploring other functions of the system, and will notify you when these become available.

Finally, I would welcome your comments during this trial period to inform our decision regarding longer-term investment into this system. To ensure that the absence reporting mechanisms run efficiently, however, please can I ask that the above contact methods are **not** used for this purpose. Please contact me in the usual way should you have any comments.

Yours sincerely

Mr C Lillington
Assistant Headteacher: Learning Specialism

Please return to the Student Registry by Friday 5th February 2010 **only** if you wish to add / amend an e-mail address for your "Priority 1" contact.

Student's name: _____ Form: _____

Contact's name: _____ Relationship: _____

E-mail: _____ Signed: _____