**Orchard Mead Academy**
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**Head of School:** Ms K Lowe
**Executive Principal:** Mr T Hague

**Effective from Monday 23rd of November 2026**

Dear Families,

At Orchard Mead Academy, we want every student to feel safe, achieve well and make the most of the opportunities available to them. A vital part of this is ensuring that students attend every lesson, on time, and make the most of their learning.

To ensure consistency across the school, we are strengthening our approach to lesson attendance and the expectations around moving between lessons. We cannot allow students to be wandering corridors or failing to attend their timetabled classrooms. This is not only damaging to their education but also creates significant safeguarding concerns. We need to know where students are, that they are safe and that they are receiving the education they are entitled to.

For this reason, from Monday 23 November 2026, we are introducing a zero-tolerance approach to truancy. We need your support in ensuring that all students understand and meet the expectations outlined below.

**Being on time to lessons - Students are expected to:**

- Arrive at every lesson on time, ready to learn, on the first bell.
- Move promptly between lessons and immediately after break and lunchtime.
- Be inside their classroom before the late bell sounds.
- The first bell signals the start of the lesson. Any student arriving after this bell will be marked late. This will result in the loss of an Orchard Oath point and may affect their eligibility for reward trips and other rewards.
- The late bell sounds five minutes after the first bell. It is a final chance for students to reach their lesson. Any student who has not arrived at their lesson before the late bell sounds will be considered to be truanting, unless they are with a member of staff undertaking an authorised activity.

**What do we mean by truancy?**
Truancy is any deliberate failure to attend a timetabled lesson, remain in an assigned lesson or attend a required school-based learning session without permission.
This includes:

- Avoiding a lesson or failing to enter the classroom.
- Remaining in corridors, toilets or other areas instead of attending lessons.
- Hiding, wandering around school or visiting friends during lesson time.
- Leaving a lesson without permission.

- Walking out of a lesson following a disagreement, sanction or instruction from a member of staff.
- Failing to attend an allocated C3 removal, internal exclusion or alternative learning space.
- Students must not be in corridors or other areas of the school during lesson time unless they have specific permission. Any student who is out of a lesson must have an authorised note or be accompanied by a member of staff. Students will be challenged if they are found outside their timetabled learning space without permission.

**What if a student needs support?**
We recognise that students may occasionally need to speak to their tutor, Head of Year, medical team or another member of staff during lesson time. However, students must not leave lessons or make their own arrangements to find these adults.

All requests for support, including medical needs, must be communicated through our on-call system. A member of staff will then come to the student or arrange for them to be collected appropriately. This ensures that students are supported when they need it, while maintaining their safety and ensuring that we know where they are at all times.

**Consequences for truancy.**
Truancy is a serious matter. It means that students are deliberately missing their education and placing themselves outside the school's usual supervision arrangements, which can have far reaching consequences. From 23 November, we will operate a graduated suspension approach for students who truant:

First offence - 1-day suspension
Second offence - 2-day suspension
Third offence - 3-day suspension and a formal meeting with parents/carers
Further offences - Further increases in suspension, as appropriate

Suspension decisions will be made by the Headteacher in accordance with statutory guidance and consideration of the individual circumstances.

We need all students to understand that attending lessons is not optional. We expect them to follow their timetable and make the most of every learning opportunity, with support available where they need it. We have a responsibility to ensure that every student is safe, accounted for and receiving their education.

**Working together.**
We want every student to succeed at Orchard Mead. Every lesson matters, and even small amounts of missed learning quickly add up. Five minutes missed from six lessons each day amounts to 30 minutes of lost learning daily, or two and a half hours every week.

We ask that you speak to your child about these expectations and reinforce the importance of attending every lesson, on time, and following staff instructions.

We will continue to provide support to students who are finding aspects of school difficult, but support and high expectations must go hand in hand. Students must understand that avoiding lessons is not an acceptable response to difficulties they may be experiencing.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us ensure that every student is safe, learning and making the most of their time at Orchard Mead.

Yours sincerely,
Ms K Lowe
Head of School