



# Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

## Attendance

In 2025, the importance of regular school attendance in the UK is clearer than ever. According to the latest findings from the Department for Education (DfE), pupils who attend school nearly every day are significantly more likely to succeed academically. For instance, Year 11 pupils with near-perfect attendance are almost twice as likely to achieve a grade 5 or higher in English and Maths GCSEs.

But the benefits of consistent attendance go beyond grades. New research from Loughborough University and the Office for National Statistics reveals a strong link between school absence and poor mental health. **Children who miss 30% of school are nearly three times more likely to experience mental health issues** compared to those with full attendance. The study highlights a concerning feedback loop: poor mental health leads to more absences, and more absences worsen mental health.

Robert Smyth Academy students continue to attend school more frequently than the national average, with fewer children classed as persistently absent (<90%), and as a result, they make great progress both academically and socially. The experiences of our students and these findings underscore the importance of addressing attendance issues early and consistently to ensure students have the best possible opportunities.

## Punctuality

Punctuality is crucial in ensuring that lessons run smoothly and without disruption. When students arrive on time, they can fully engage, which helps create a focused and productive learning environment.

**Being punctual is also about respect.** Anyone reading this letter can imagine what might happen if they were consistently late to work and inconvenienced others. Similarly, when students are late to class, it interrupts the teacher's lesson and distracts other students, making it harder for everyone to stay on track.

Parents can ensure that their children develop this valuable life skill in several ways at home:

1. **Preparation:** Make sure they lay out clothes, pack school bags, and set alarms. This reduces morning rush and stress. If you need a 'bad cop', tell them the Principal said they had to do it!
2. **Establish Routines:** Create a daily schedule that includes specific times for waking up, meals, homework, and bedtime. Consistent routines help them develop effective time management skills.
3. **Use Visual Aids:** Tools like calendars, clocks, and timers can help children visualise the time.
4. **Set Clear Expectations:** Explain the importance of being on time and the consequences of lateness. Make sure children understand what is expected of them.
5. **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise and reward punctual behaviour. Positive reinforcement can motivate children to continue being on time.

**At school, the gates will close at 8.45 am, and any student who arrives after this time will be marked as late and assigned a detention. Similarly, lateness to the lesson will be sanctioned.**

We sincerely thank all families for the great standards that they set regarding attendance and punctuality. This gives students the foundation for success and wellness, and it allows our teachers to focus on teaching.



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## **Note on Uniform Standards**

Please be reminded that our lower school uniform policy allows for one ear piercing in each ear lobe. No other piercings, or "retainer studs" are permitted and, if worn, could be sanctioned with loss of social time. We appreciate your support in this matter.

## **Supporting Children Exposed to Distressing Online Content**

This week, some students have reported watching the graphic footage of the Charlie Kirk shooting online, and this has clearly caused emotional distress to some children, quite understandably.

**As a parent, you will be regularly monitoring your child's social media activity so that they are safe online and to ensure that they are only using age-appropriate applications and limiting their daily use.** If you are concerned that a child has witnessed graphic footage, it's important to act quickly and supportively. Start by gently asking the child what they've seen and how it made them feel. Look out for signs of distress such as sleep issues, anxiety, or behavioural changes.

You can report harmful or upsetting content to platforms directly, and if they don't respond appropriately, escalate the issue via Report Harmful Content. For further support, contact the NSPCC Helpline at 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). Children can also reach out to Childline for confidential help at any time.

If your child has been impacted by witnessing this video and you feel that we may be able to support them in school, then you can contact a member of the **Safeguarding Team**:

<https://www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk/about/safeguarding/>

If students can reach out for support by logging a concern on **My Voice** or talking to a member of the team:

<https://www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk/about/safeguarding/myvoice/>

Students should note that if they wish to receive support, they should **state their name** via My Voice; otherwise, the Safeguarding Team may not be able to follow this up effectively.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for your ongoing efforts to support your child academically, socially and emotionally.

Yours sincerely,

D Cleary  
Principal