

📍 **Downham Market Campus**  
Athena Sixth Form College  
Ryston End  
Downham Market  
PE38 9AY

17 July 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

## Attendance for September

As we move forward towards our 'new normal', I would like to thank you for your continued assistance in helping us to support your child with their learning over the last few months which have undoubtedly been challenging for everyone, in at least some small way.

We will be implementing additional academic support to ensure any critical gaps in learning as a result of the lockdown are identified and learning from this point forward is accelerated to ensure that they meet their potential. There will be different mechanisms for emotional support and wellbeing and this means it is extremely important for your child to attend College regularly.

### Legislation regarding school attendance

From September 2020 the Government will be reinstating the legislation relating to College attendance which means that attendance will be mandatory. This means that all students will be expected to attend College five days a week, unless they are unable to do so due to exceptional reasons. In order for students to meet their potential, regular attendance and punctuality is essential. The responsibility for ensuring this lies collectively with the student, parents/carers and the College. This attendance policy requires students to adhere to the same procedures as would be expected of them in the world of work.

This policy ensures the safety and wellbeing of students at all times, according to safeguarding regulations.

Failing to attend the College will:

- Affect your overall progress and development.
- Hinder your learning and achievement.
- Reduce your chances of entry into A2 examinations.
- Restrict your opportunity to participate in Post 16 events.
- May result in you being asked to leave the College for alternative Post 16 provision.

The College expects all Post 16 students to:

- Attend all registration sessions and all lessons. 100% attendance is the target.
- Attend tutorial, mentoring and enrichment programmes.

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- Adhere to procedures laid out in the post 16 attendance policy.

I am sure you will agree, given the amount of education students have missed this year, it is even more important that absence is kept to a minimum and holidays, driving lessons or events are arranged for outside of term time.

### **What does this mean in practice?**

As a Trust, we are committed to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and students so that they are able to return to College safe and well in September. We have prepared a plan to create a safe return that will be added to or amended over the summer break as further guidance becomes available. If your child is worried about coming back to or starting College in September and you feel they may need more support please do contact us to discuss their needs, as soon as possible, as ‘prevention is better than cure’. Colleges will be able to offer direct support or engage with other agencies where appropriate.

For those students who have been ‘shielding’, the advice to shield is pausing on 1st August 2020, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission. This means shielded students can also return to College even though they remain on the ‘shielded patient’ list; as can those who have family members who are currently shielding. However, where your child is under the care of a specialist health professional, you should discuss any concerns you have about a return to College as a matter of some urgency before the start of the new term. If their clinician advises continued shielding, this would need to be put in writing and shared with us to make alternative education arrangements.

### **What can you do to help?**

#### *Confidence to return*

The biggest and most helpful thing you can do for your child is help them to feel comfortable about returning to or starting at Athena. Talking to your child and helping them to understand the importance of returning to a normality that means they continue learning and restart their social lives will make them feel more confident about the future.

#### *Routines*

It is likely that daily routines during the lockdown period have been disrupted so we advise you to start implementing a “normal” College routine over the summer break so that 7am alarms and longer days of concentration do not come as too much of a shock in September.

#### *Continued Learning*

Maintaining academic endeavour throughout the summer will inevitably aid your child’s progress in September and the year ahead. Teachers have set an abundance of transition work for new Year 12 which is all accessible via the Athena College closure portal. Year 13 students have also been set summer work by their teachers which they can be working on in

● hello@athena-college.co.uk  
● www.athena-college.co.uk  
● 01366 389000



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preparation for their return. In addition, students need to continue reading about the wider world, volunteering/working where possible, and engaging in extracurricular activities such as sport or other hobbies to remain happy and healthy.

We hope that the above information assists you to make good choices in respect of your child's return to full time education in September and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and safe summer break.

Thank you for your continued support of your child's education – we are looking forward to working with you in the new academic year.

Yours faithfully

Amy Chapman  
**Director of Sixth Form**