

05 October 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I write to welcome you back to the new academic year at Ark Victoria Academy, to share some exciting news about the year 11 conference and master classes, to formally introduce myself as the Head of year 11 2021 – 2022 and to set out my expectations of attendance for your child.

Year 11 conference & remote master classes

As part of our commitment to you and to our students in the lead up to their mock exams we will be delivering a year 11 conference.

For our students...

On Thursday 21st October we are delighted to be welcoming 'Positively You' to Ark Victoria Academy to support us with our year 11 conference. 'Positively You' will deliver 2 workshops to our year 11 students in the morning, before the students join their master classes in English and Maths in the afternoon. On Friday 22nd October students will work from home and receive online masterclasses in science and options A, B & C.

For our parents...

We have organised for 'Positively You' to offer a one-hour Parent Twilight session for parents and carers from 5pm on the 21st of October, the day of the school workshop. The twilight sessions will be delivered virtually and are timed to support you. It is simple to set up and follows all safeguarding policies.

The twilight sessions are fun and informative and offer parents the perfect opportunity to encourage and support students at home as they try out their new skills.

I will write out again to you nearer to the time with details of the day and how to access the parent twilight session.

Attendance matters

My expectation is for all students to have 100% attendance and 100% punctuality to school and all lessons. There is strong statistical evidence to show that students who achieve this are more successful in school, make greater progress and that they are more likely to achieve their academic potential.

I would like to thank all parents/carers for their support during the last few years because the overall attendance for this year group has significantly improved. The government have strict regulations regarding attendance at school. These regulations make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In such exceptional circumstances, headteachers determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted. Please note that under these amendments, family holidays do not qualify as exceptional circumstances.

The strongest factor in underperformance at GCSE is irregular or poor attendance and it is our belief that we would be failing in our responsibility if we sanctioned time off school in all but the most exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances, requests for the school to authorise absence should be made to Mrs Chatwin the Associate Head Teacher responsible for behaviour and attendance in advance, not in retrospect.

The term dates for 2021/22 and 2022/23 are available to view on the website to help parents/carers plan for the academic year and maximise their son/daughter's attendance in school.

The following national statistics clearly show the dramatic impact that poor attendance in term time can have on achievement:

- 97% attendance and above will give you a 73% chance of achieving grades 9-4 in English and maths at GCSE whatever your ability.
- Below 90% will give you only a 27% chance of achieving grades 9-4 in English and maths at GCSE whatever your ability.
- 90% attendance sounds good, but this is equivalent to one day off in ten and over the five years at Ark Victoria Academy this is equal to 95 days of absence.
- Being absent for 17 days a year can result to a drop in one GCSE grade.

Our own data supports this national pattern and I hope this helps to explain the school's lack of flexibility in this area and why we strive so hard to exceed all our attendance targets.

Last year was another abnormal year which brought about many challenges. I would like to thank all of you for the support you gave to your child and to Ark Victoria Academy during this time. Finally, if you have any concerns or would like to discuss support available for your child in their final year, please contact me on email at s.masoud@arkvictoria.org or by telephoning the school office on 0121 393 4459.

Kind regards,

S Masoud

Miss S. Masoud

Pupil Achievement Manager – Head of Year 11