

Friday Focus

Friday 5th Sept 2025



Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust
...everyone in our Trust.



It has been a wonderful week at school. I loved welcoming all of our students back to school and seeing our new Year 7 students walking in their smart uniform for the first time. There were smiles

across everybody's faces and everyone was ready for the new year. We spent time in extended tutor sessions getting everyone ready for the year ahead. In assembly I spoke to the students about kindness. It cannot be underestimated how good kindness makes us feel and we can all be more kind. The students have responded appropriately and I have heard so many welcomes and seen so many smiles around school.

Yesterday we welcomed our local MP to school, Sir Mel Stride MP. Sir Mel met with our Belief and Values Ambassadors as well as our student leadership team. The students' questions were very specific to our area and the needs of our community. They discussed around issues of rural public transport, our sixth form and promoting diversity in our area. Sir Mel then had a tour of the school, visiting lessons. He managed to deliver a successful teaching episode in history, and enjoyed discussing the subject with Mrs Grace's class. Sir Mel then met with myself, our CEO Rachel Shaw and Deputy Trust Leader Susanne Kiff. We discussed education issues around our school and in particular our school sixth form and how we could work together to try and keep it open. He understood our concerns and he could see how we are trying to resolve the situation. Overall, Sir Mel enjoyed his visit to our school and commented how good it felt walking around and speaking to our students.

Sponsored Walk:

Our annual sponsored walk will be on Friday 19th September. Full details and information will be sent out soon. It is an amazing event and I know how much the students get out of it. Thank you to Mr Barnett and Mr Bailey for organising it.

Meet the Tutor Evening:

We also have our Meet the Tutor evening on Thursday 18th September. This is for all year groups and an opportunity to meet your child's tutor in school.

Enrichment Week Consultation Evening:

Thank you to those who have already given feedback about Enrichment week at Okehampton College. We will be discussing this further at our consultation evening on Tuesday 9th September 4:30-5:30 pm in the Octagon. Please fill in [this online form](#) to let us know if you will be attending.



Why attendance matters to all staff at Okehampton.

By R. Corkell - Assistant Principal

Regular school attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic attainment. Pupils who attend consistently have greater exposure to teaching, structured learning, and enrichment opportunities, which builds knowledge and skills over time. Conversely, poor attendance disrupts learning, widens gaps in understanding, and reduces the likelihood of achieving expected standards. Research shows that even small drops in attendance can have a significant impact on exam performance, making regular presence in school vital for long-term educational success.

The statistics below are taken from the most recent DfE report on attainment linking to attainment and grade outcomes:

Overall Absence Rates by Attainment Level

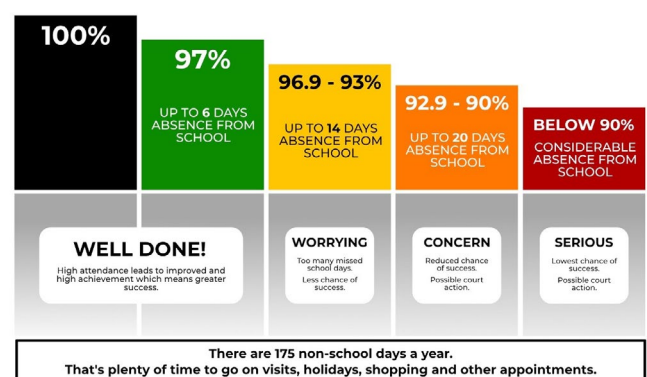
- Pupils who did not achieve grades 9–4 in English & Maths had an absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage. (Under 92%)
- Those who achieved a grade 4 had an absence rate of 5.2%.
- Pupils who achieved grades 9–5 had a much lower absence rate of 3.7%. (Above 96%)

For grades 9–5 in English and Maths:

1. Persistently absent pupils (those under 90% attendance) - only 16.8% achieved the 9-5 grade.
2. Severely absent pupils (those under 50% attendance) only 5.0% achieved grades 9–5.
3. In contrast, 66.4% of those with no absence and 54.4% of those with 0–5% absence achieved grades 9–5.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/link-between-attendance-and-attainment>

WHAT IS YOUR ATTENDANCE?



Importance Attendance News

This is an important update about school attendance procedures for the 2025/2026 academic year.

We really want to work with our students, families and community partners to ensure every child has access to a fantastic education through regular attendance at school. Children with attendance over 97% will benefit academically, as well as socially and emotionally.

Your efforts, working in partnership with the school, will ensure that your child will have the best chance to achieve their academic potential and develop positive relationships with their peers and the adults who are there to support them, this in turn will positively impact their resilience and wellbeing.

- Regular attendance (97% and above) enables your child to;
- access the lessons needed to achieve their expected grades
- maintain friendships and develop new ones
- have access to social and sporting events offered by the school
- explore potential life skills
- develop work habits such as good punctuality which are essential to thrive in the world of employment

If you are worried about your child/children's attendance, the first port of call is to discuss your concerns with the school directly. Most difficulties relating to absence can be dealt with quickly and promptly by in-school support, and all schools work closely with Early Help, health and the local authority teams who may also be able to help if needed. We are committed to supporting you so it's important you contact us as soon as possible if you have any concerns you would like to discuss.

We are committed to developing positive, open, and effective communication between home and school and providing support, advice and guidance for parents/carers and pupils when needed.

In order to do this, we will regularly be communicating with families about their child's attendance in several ways, including;

- Regular attendance focus on newsletters to share important information and updates.
- Every parent/carer will be informed about their child's attendance by email twice each half term - we would really appreciate your support in talking to your child about their attendance and celebrating with them when they have consistently been in school every day, or when they have tried really hard to improve their attendance.

- Your child's Class teacher/form tutor may contact you to ensure everything is OK and offer support following any unauthorised absence, after 3 days of consecutive absence or after 3 incidents of absence within a 4-week period.
- In line with our policy, parents/carers will receive letters regarding their child's attendance should it fall beneath 96%. Where attendance is below 90%, an Attendance Support meeting may be arranged to help identify any areas that need additional support. At this meeting, personalised and achievable targets for pupils will be developed, based on their individual needs and circumstances.
- Parents/Carers will be informed twice a year about the process for requesting absence during term time and the processes involved should an absence not be considered an exceptional circumstance. (The first of these letters will be sent to all parents/carers on Monday).

Additionally, To ensure clarity and consistency in managing pupil absences, we would like to remind parents and carers of the following important information regarding illness-related absences: In line with NHS guidance and the Statutory Attendance Framework, absences can only be authorised if the school is satisfied that your child is medically unfit to attend. To support this, we kindly ask that you contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence and provide a specific reason, including any symptoms or medical advice received. Where necessary, we may request medical evidence to ensure that we can appropriately support your child's attendance. Please consider the NHS guidance as we will only be authorising illness in line with the NHS advice;

[Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)

The school level appendix of the Trust attendance policy contains details of relevant staff members who you can contact to discuss any concerns you may have regarding your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact us so as we can support where possible.

Once again, thank you for your continued support. We hope that you and your child/children had an enjoyable Summer and we look forward to a new academic year.



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INTRODUCING OUR NEW THRIVEHIVE

The ThriveHive Padlet is a one-stop hub of resources for young people and families covering a wide range of important topics. It's organised into clear sections such as:

- **Health & Support** (e.g., mental health, sleep, addiction, wellbeing)
- **Online Safety** (cybersecurity, safe internet use)
- Relationships & Families
- **LGBTQ+ support**
- **Support on substance misuse**
- **Careers, Education & Skills** (including UCAS, apprenticeships, BBC Bitesize, and career planning tools)
- **Young Carers & Life Transitions**

It's packed with links to trusted organizations such as NSPCC, Childline, YoungMinds, The Mix, Refuge, Beat, Intercom Trust, National Careers Service, UCAS, and many more.

Whether you're looking for someone to talk to, tips on staying safe, or inspiration for your future, ThriveHive is here to support and empower you.

Explore it here using [this link](#) or the Qr code below. It can also be found via the safeguarding pages on our own website [here](#).

THRIVEhive Padlet



USEFUL LINKS

Term Dates



Letters Home



Enrichment Programme



Home Learning Club



Mondays & Tuesdays

After School



3:15pm - 4:15pm



In room 419

(Science Corridor Computer Room)

Open to all students; those who may need a bit of extra help to complete Home Learning or for those who just need a quiet space to work. The club is staffed by two staff members with internet, computers and printers available.

Late buses are available on Tuesdays at 5:15 pm.



KEY DATES

- Tuesday 9th September 2025 - Enrichment Week Consultation Evning 4:30-5:30pm
- Thursday 18th September 2025 - Meet the Tutor for All Year Groups
- Friday 19th September 2025 - Sponsored Walk
- Wednesday 24 September 2025 - Year 5 & 6 Open Evening

Please do get in touch if you have any questions.

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