

30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Academic Year 2023/2024**

The Executive Board of Tandridge Learning Trust has been considering ways of improving attendance rates for both pupils and staff during the long Autumn Term. This term, we have seen winter illnesses, such as colds and flu further exasperated by COVID infections and we really need to consider potential ways in which we can reduce illness-related absence across our schools. With this in mind, we have decided to trial a change to the Academic Year 2023/2024 and introduce a two-week Autumn Half Term break instead of our usual one week, to see if this reduces overall absence rates.

We are aware that a growing number of local schools and other multi-academy trusts have already moved to this holiday pattern and, as a result, they have reported a positive impact in a number of areas - most importantly they report an improvement in both pupil and staff attendance rates. The Autumn Term is the longest one in the school year and we consistently see higher-than-average illness-related absence at this time. We know that the most positive impact upon pupil achievement and success comes from the quality of teaching and consistency provided by their teacher. Teaching staff absences due to illness are unavoidable and schools do their very best to minimise any disruption to learning but our hope is that by extending the break in the Autumn Term we can potentially reduce at least some incidents of absence.

The additional days required to enable a two-week half-term will be made up over the course of the academic year. We intend to start the Autumn Term in 2023, slightly earlier, which should have minimal impact on pupils and their families due to our usual staff INSET days at the start of the year. Rather than starting mid-week, most pupils will be starting school from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The remaining days will be added on to the Summer Term 2024, with a revised end of term date of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

The Autumn half-term dates for our schools will run from **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 inclusive**. We have checked that these dates are in line with those being observed by most other local schools who run a two-week October Half Term in our area. We are aware that some parents may have children in more than one school, so we wanted to make this as convenient as possible.

At Tandridge Learning Trust we place a high importance on the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. Our termly parent newsletters regularly feature the work we are doing in this significant area. We hope that the wellbeing of both pupils and staff will improve and absence rates can be reduced, as a result of trialling the longer break in the Autumn Term next year. It will give everyone a chance to take an extended break and recharge their batteries. Those schools who have already made the change have noticed the improvement to wellbeing. An additional benefit reported for many families is the opportunity to take a two-week family holiday at a different time of year which may offer greater flexibility in booking dates. This can often mean more affordable prices for holidays, which may also be a consideration for some of our families.

As always, the needs of our learners lie at the heart of our decision-making, our aim to minimise absence rates and support wellbeing wherever we can. Therefore, we will evaluate the data on both pupil and staff absence carefully and should it prove to have the intended beneficial effects, we will consider making this a permanent change going forwards.

We thank you for your support in this matter and will ensure we share the outcomes of this trial in due course.

Best wishes



Rebecca Plaskitt, Chief Executive, Tandridge Learning Trust