

Headteacher: Mr D. Whales | Chair of Governors: Mr A. Brown

27<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Good afternoon,

I had intended to write to you at the end of the Easter holidays in readiness for the start of the summer term. However, as we have received a few queries about the rationale behind today's part non-uniform day, I wanted to reach out now.

A huge amount of time and effort goes into thinking about and delivering school improvement. *How do we make Ken Stimpson Academy better?* Depending on your perspective, you would each give a different answer.

At the moment, across the national education landscape, there are two major drivers:

- Attendance
- Literacy/Reading

The government has invested in a scheme called RISE (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence). These hub-schools working within the system provide ideas, guidance and examples to support improvement. Their top priority is attendance. We have been attending sessions and are trying to embed some of the approaches that have been shared.

The thinking is all about changing behaviours and habits to improve the number of children in school each day. Many of you will know that attendance nationally has not fully recovered since Covid, and too often the students who need to be in school the most are the ones who are not.

In education, we always walk a tightrope between punishment and reward when trying to change behaviour. In my opinion, punishment often creates compliance or resentment, while reward can create dependence rather than genuine self-improvement. A real challenge in schools.

Today we wanted to recognise those students who achieved 20 out of 20 days in January, starting the year with a clear statement about the importance of being in school every day. You may not fully agree with the method, but I hope most of us share the belief that encouraging high attendance is the right thing to do.

Back to the question: How do we make KSA better?

Is it through:

- Exam results?
- Ensuring children are safe in school?
- Ensuring they enjoy school?
- Helping them leave as fully rounded young people?

For me, the answer is the bottom three, *which ultimately lead to better exam results*. Why the emphasis on attendance? Because every piece of evidence available clearly shows that low attendance has a

significant and negative impact on outcomes. Attendance below 95% dramatically reduces the likelihood of successfully navigating exams.

Attendance is the single biggest area where we need your partnership. Most of us are parents ourselves we understand illness, siblings passing bugs around, ongoing medical issues, individual family challenges and the daily juggle of work and childcare. We are not oblivious to life's pressures; I get it.

But the principle remains the same: to give your children the best chance in education, they need to be in school as often as possible.

Regarding today, well done to all the students who achieved the 20 days. To anyone (parents or students) who felt upset at missing out, we apologise; that was never our intention. While only a small number of concerns have been raised, I hope, glass half full, that the impact has been greater awareness of the importance of attendance. However, given the upset caused, it is unlikely we will repeat this particular approach in the same way.

I will be writing a follow-up letter, hopefully today, about how parents can access me. Sometimes parents call in wanting to speak to the Headteacher. I am rarely easy to reach directly, and often not the best person to resolve certain queries first. It is important to me, though, that I am not hidden away and that I do listen. To make this easier, I plan to create designated times where parents can book appointments with me, allowing these conversations to be scheduled and meaningful.

Many thanks for reading this far.



**Mr D Whales**  
**Headteacher**

Headteacher: Damien Whales, Ken Stimpson Academy is a school within the Four Cs Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

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