



10th November 2023

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Dear Parents/Carers

Autumn Update

It's just over two weeks since half-term and school is in full swing, I hope it will be useful to have an update on some changes at school and some areas where we would welcome your support.

School Uniform

We regularly review school uniform and will be making some slight adjustments following discussions with students and governors. Students will now be permitted to wear two ear piercings rather than one and the earrings can be discreet rather than simply gold and silver studs. Hoops and earrings that extend beyond the frame of the ear and nose piercings will not be permitted.

Students should be wearing their uniform with pride and in line with the school policy. As the school year progresses, we pick up on an increasing number of infringements. The students have been reminded this week about: skirt lengths, students are not permitted to roll their skirts up; trousers are to be worn above the waist with shirts tucked in; blazers are compulsory and hoodies are not permitted in school. Staff will be issuing pastoral detentions where students choose to break school rules. I am sure they leave their homes well-dressed each morning and we are grateful for your support.

Class Charts

We are receiving lovely feedback about the new app. I continue to be delighted that the number of Edgpoints being issued is a massive increase on previous years, whilst at the same time the number of behavioural incidents has fallen significantly. Thank you for using the app and actively participating in discussing the students school day, it really does make a difference. Even more exciting, we have now turned on the Edgshop where students can spend their points. We hope to extend the range of items the students can purchase and are keen to hear from any local businesses who can support us with prizes.

Vaping and nitrous oxide

I am sure you will share our concerns over the prevalence of vaping in the community. It is important that parents are aware that vaping is illegal for those under the age of 18 and is strictly prohibited in school. Whilst a rarity, we have had occasional issues; where this occurs students will be dealt with under the drugs and alcohol policy. Sanctions range from Internal re-set days and quickly escalate to Suspensions, there is absolutely no excuse for students to be vaping or to be in possession of vapes.

Parents should also be aware that laughing gas or nitrous oxide has now been classified as a Class C drug, this can often be found in small canisters. Nitrous oxide deprives the brain of oxygen and can have significant consequences.

Staff recruitment

There is a national shortage of teachers; last year the government target for training new teachers was missed by 50%. We have been fortunate not to have been impacted by this in the past, but recruitment is now incredibly challenging. We would be grateful if you could [share](#) social media posts so those vacancies get to the widest possible audience. We have a number of current vacancies and at present, this is likely to become even more challenging in January. I want to express my thanks to staff for being so flexible in helping to provide cover and deliver in subjects in second and occasionally third specialisms. We are fortunate to have such a highly skilled and dedicated group of staff.

SEND

We have a growing number of students with Education and Health Care Plans, additional needs and access arrangements, this growth far outstrips the funding. We operate a system where the majority of support is delivered through Quality First Teaching, where the classroom teacher quite rightly takes the lead in meeting needs. In core subjects, we use funding to provide extra teaching groups that allow us to focus on identified needs. We have also moved to fewer general Learning Support Assistants to Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) with subject specialisms. Our HLTAs are able to provide effective curriculum support, especially as students move up through the school and on to more challenging content. HLTAs are clearly a more expensive provision, but can provide significant impact. We are confident that this is more appropriate than having LSAs in all lessons where there are additional needs.

We are extremely proud of our students with additional needs and also proud of the staff team that provides support. We want ALL students to access the full curriculum and enjoy their time at school.

Reading Ages

We have begun issuing reading ages following our first set of tests. We will repeat these tests later in the year so that we can monitor progress. All students should have a reading book with them in school and are given time to read at the start of English lessons and at KS3 during library lessons. The most significant way to impact their reading age is for the students to read in their own time and that the books are at the appropriate reading age to stretch them. Our library books are coded to support this and the librarians can help students to make sure their books are in the right band. Parents and carers can help by ensuring students read for at least an hour a week and we encourage you to listen to them reading aloud and/or check their comprehension by asking them what they've read.

Later in the year, we are hoping to launch an online intervention programme using a Microsoft package and we will be in touch as soon as this is set up. Those in need of most support are already in our morning intervention sessions and doing paired reading with sixth formers.

Reminders

Thursday 16th November – Sixth form Open Evening 6-8pm - book a slot [here](#).

Thursday 23rd November – PTA Christmas shopping Event – please join us!

Friday 24th November – INSET day, school is closed to students.

Thursday 30th November – Year 13 Progress Evening, school closes at 2.40pm

Thursday 7th December- Year 9 Progress Evening, school closes at 2.40pm

Good luck to all our Year 11 students as they start their mocks next week.

Thank you so much for your generosity for the sponsored walk, the PTA have just confirmed we have raised over £13,000 providing much needed funds for the school. And finally, as always, we are saving all the schools successes and celebrations for our Christmas newsletter, it looks like a bumper edition!

With thanks for your continued support of the school.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Matthews
Headteacher