



4th September 2023

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Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome back to the start of a new academic year. I hope you and your families have enjoyed the summer and the students are rested and ready to return to school – we are looking forward to seeing them all tomorrow.

RAAC

No doubt you will have seen new items related to aerated concrete, the school was surveyed last year and no RAAC was found. We are therefore fortunate to not be affected by this issue.

School Uniform

The British weather is being typically unpredictable, of course as soon as school re-starts the sun appears and the temperature rises. I am always keen to make sure we set high standards at the start of term, but it is not fair to the students to be in full uniform in this heat. We will therefore return to summer uniform rules whereby students do not have to wear ties or blazers. We expect to be back in full uniform next Monday. Please can I ask for your support in ensuring students have school shoes (not black trainers); piercings comply with school rules with just one stud in the lower ear lobe; gel nails/acrylics/extensions are removed; skirts should be worn to just above the knee (without being rolled) and trousers worn on the waist; finally, school blazers are compulsory and jumpers optional.

Class Charts

Over the course of the next two weeks, we will be launching a new parent and student app, Class Charts. This will provide access to students' attendance, rewards, sanctions and homework. Staff have been trained on this over the two INSET days. We do ask for your patience as we move to a live system, we are already picking up a couple of anomalies and I've no doubt that a full data set will throw us some curve balls over the next few days.

SIMS is still our master data system and we ask that you use the SIMS app for changes to student details and to access their attendance and timetable. You will be able to use Class Charts to see Edgpoints, along with low level sanctions such as detentions. We have changed the detention system to provide a little more clarity and consistency as explained below. All homework will now be recorded on Class Charts, but we will continue to use Google Classroom for students to upload and submit assignments and access resources. We will be switching off notifications from Google Classroom, the system is a little clunky and you will be able to see all homework via Class Charts.

I am hoping this will be a significant improvement for families, most importantly you will be able to see all the positives that students achieve and we hope this adds value to them collecting Edgpoints.

Behaviour systems

We review behaviour systems every few years and this time we have had to give thought into how best to communicate to you. The system will feel relatively familiar to students as we make slight adjustments to what they are used to, for parents/carers it's the first time you may have seen lots of the detail other than via the old diaries. Of course, most students will not have experienced detentions, but it is useful for everyone to know how it works.

The detention system is split into two main sections. Firstly, poor behaviour related to lessons and learning sanctions in this area have a prefix of 'D' to denote a department detention. Secondly, poor behaviour related to issues outside of lessons such as uniform, lateness or poor behaviour in social time will have a prefix of 'P' for pastoral detention. These detentions vary in length from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. So, a 'D1' is a 10 min detention, 'D2' 20 min and a 'D3' 30min. The same number system applies to pastoral detentions.

In addition, there are call-out detentions and Senior Leadership detentions for more serious incidents, repeated breaches or non-attendance to pastoral or department detentions. I attach a brief summary at the end of this letter and we will share a 10 minute video that will be shown to students this week.

There are no changes to the significant sanctions system, such as internal reset days or suspensions. As usual these will be communicated via an individual phone call.

The main change that students will see is that typically we work on a 3-warning system, on the third warning students are removed from lessons to ensure classrooms are focussed and learning is not lost to disruptive behaviour. This is being tightened up, second warnings will now be recorded and carry a 'D1' detention (on the first instance). This allows us to ensure parents/carers are more fully aware of classroom behaviour and that the students do not go from no sanction straight to a call out.

We are fortunate that behaviour at school is very good and the vast, vast majority do not receive any sanctions. The changes to the system should help to further reduce any low level disruption, collect positive points and help you to have conversations at home to celebrate the good and discuss any negative aspects with the students.

Site/IT work

It's been a busy summer for the facilities team, lots of areas have been redecorated, the sports centre has a new roof and various floorings have been replaced to improve the environment for the students. Most significantly, we have used a grant from the Department of Education to replace the majority of light fittings across the school. This makes spaces lighter and brighter but has also reduced electricity usage by two thirds and is much more environmentally friendly. We have also used some of the grant to re-place ageing staff PC's with laptops.

School Dog

We recently surveyed students on mental health and well-being. One of the most frequently mentioned sources of support were family pets. We think it would be a real asset to have a school dog to support mental health and anxiety. Mr and Mrs Meyer have kindly agreed that their new puppy, Dax, can join the school staff team. Dax will be based in student support in Mrs Martin's office to support those with allergies or phobias; Dax will only be in the main area with the agreement of students present. Dax has to complete training and familiarisation and so will be having extremely limited interaction with students until February. A very warm welcome to Dax!

Results

My warmest congratulations to our Year 13 and 11 students. These cohorts (along with others) were significantly disrupted by the pandemic and also had to contend with a return to the pre-pandemic grade boundaries. This certainly made grades (particularly at the higher end) more difficult to achieve than in recent years. Despite this they have done brilliantly. Those in Year 13 are moving on to fantastic university courses, apprenticeships, the work of work or are taking gap years. Year 11's are staying in Sixth Form, or off to college or apprenticeships. We expect Sixth Form to be full, with approximately 230 joining Year 12 in what could be our largest ever intake. We wish all our Year 11 and 13 students the very best for the future.

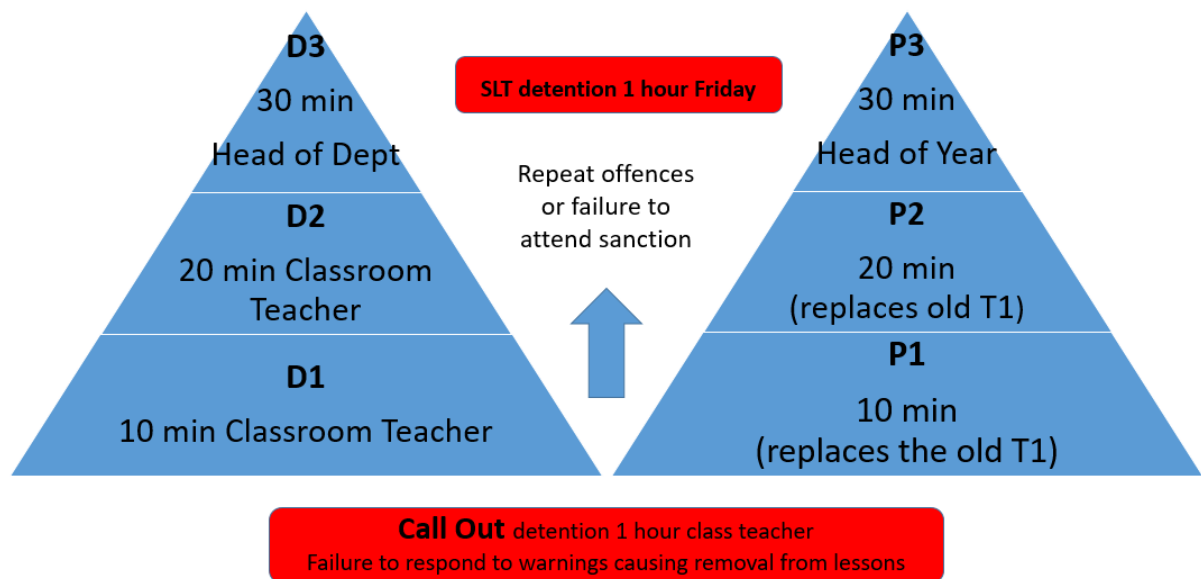
As always, the staff have worked hard across the last two days to prepare for the start of term, we are looking forward to welcoming everyone back and look forward to the year ahead.

Yours faithfully



Mr S Matthews
Headteacher

Changes to behaviour system



Behaviour in Lessons

