

Post Ofsted Parent/Carer Update: May 2018

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write to inform you of developments in the school over the past half term.

We have been working hard to devise and implement precise plans that will have a positive and measurable impact on our students. The revised school improvement plan now focuses on four areas:

- Ensuring we achieve excellent student outcomes for all
- A community where all are proud to belong with excellent behaviour, attendance and opportunity
- Excellent leadership and management at all levels
- Development of effective, sustainable use of school resources contributing to school improvement

The Governors held their first School Improvement Committee meeting with the Local Authority school advisor on May 6th. This in itself is part of developing excellent leadership at all levels. At this meeting Governors looked in detail at the predicted outcomes for the summer while acknowledging that predictions are much more difficult this year due to the new specifications and exams in virtually all subjects. All the data we have suggests improved attainment overall at KS4 and especially in the core subjects of Maths, English and Science. It is not possible to predict what the Progress 8 score will be as that will depend on the actual performance of all students across the country this summer. I have attached some questions and answers regarding the new GCSE exams which has been produced by the Association of School and College Leaders. Post 16 outcomes are looking very promising with positive value added for both A level and Vocational courses.

In the past couple of weeks we have observed over 30 lessons across every subject in school and the School Advisor was present for a few of these observations. We saw good levels of challenge, engagement and differentiation within these lessons with students really focussed on their learning.

As a result of the options process in Years 8 and 9 this year we have viable groups in all subjects apart from Textiles which we were not able to run at all in either Year 9 or 10 and Music in Year 10.

I am happy to report that we have no staff vacancies for September and that there has been need for very little in the way of recruitment this year. We have been able to make some excellent appointments for the new school year - Mrs Aspden will join us from LSA as the new Head of English; Mrs Swainson is moving from a school near London to be the new Head of Art & Photography; Mr Graham-Hyde who is currently at Runshaw College will teach Psychology, Sociology and RS; Miss Kealey will join us as teacher of Geography.

We continue to focus on attendance which is stubbornly remaining at around 94.5% when we aim for 96%. Attendance has a real impact on progress and I would ask for your support in making sure that your sons and daughters are in school and not absent for minor issues. It is often said, but while 90% attendance sounds good it means, on average, one day off in every 10 - this is why attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence by the Government. We do make home visits on a regular basis to check on the welfare of students if they are not in school – as the authorities would expect us to do. Could I ask that leave of absence forms be returned three weeks before the requested date as far as possible – though it is important to emphasise that holidays in term time are not authorised.

Punctuality is important – both in school and as a life skill. After half term we will be trialling a new system for those who arrive after the bell at 8.55am. Students who arrive after 8.55am will be issued with a lunchtime detention from 1.45pm – 2.05pm (during examination season this will be 12.45pm – 1.05pm) which allows students to have their lunch and go to the toilet. If a student fails to attend the lunchtime detention then they will be issued with a serious defiance detention for the same day.

I would like to thank parents and carers who have supported school in tackling any behaviour issues with their sons and daughters and reinforcing the message of positive behaviour for learning. I am pleased to report that the number of Fixed Term Exclusions has dropped dramatically on this stage last year and that the number of demerits given for behaviour issues has begun to decline according to our weekly analysis.

Plans for the revision of the pastoral structure are now well underway. The staff responsible for particular year groups from September are as follows:

Year 7 Mr A Penney
Year 8 Mrs E O'Donnell
Year 9 Miss L Coulthard
Year 10 Mrs J Beesley
Year 11 Miss G Clancy

There will be an opportunity for a 'meet the mentor' evening in the second half of this term so that you can meet you son or daughter's new mentor and Head of Year. We will send out the dates for these events straight after half term.

As you are no doubt aware, government real terms cuts have put a huge strain on schools up and down the country. We continue to work hard to monitor our spending carefully so that we can support our learners in making good progress. Unlike many schools, we have managed not to run in to a deficit but rising costs mean that it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide the high quality learning opportunities our students deserve whilst managing our budget, particularly in subjects such as Design Technology and Art. Governors are therefore going to meet later this term to discuss the possibility of requesting voluntary parental contributions and we do hope that you will support us in this.

Despite the financial restraints on the actual school budget, a considerable amount of work will be done on the site as we have received external funding to improve facilities:

- The 4 classrooms in 'Old Science' are in a very poor state and a considerable amount of condition led work will be undertaken by the Local Authority to improve the heating, lighting and infrastructure. This work is likely to begin at the start of June and last until October half term – it is a large project and there would never be a school holiday long enough to cover the extent of work needed. As 'Old Science' is a separate building it will be secured by the contractors and we will draw up plans with them for access routes and fire evacuation.
- Lancashire Catering Service have agreed to invest a considerable amount of money in improving the dining area, extending the available space to eat by 120 seats and providing an additional food sales point. This will certainly ease congestion at lunchtime. This work is due to be done over the summer holidays.
- The third major piece of work to be done in the summer holidays will be an upgrade to the network and wireless system in school which will greatly speed up access to and running of the system.
- The Local Authority has also agreed to reroof the Hub – a roof which has been causing problems for some time. This work has to be scheduled as yet.

To finish with, I have put in recent e-letters the fact that so many students are engaged in really wonderful extracurricular activities and make a really positive contribution to school and their community. We look forward to celebrating that at the Rewards Evening in July.

With best wishes and thanks for your continued support,

Andrew Waller
Headteacher