



This weekly newsletter

This newsletter is issued every Friday and is the main communication with home. I have asked all the students at the start of term to ensure that the newsletter gets home so that parents can read it even if students choose not to. Much of the information in the newsletter is not repeated in separate letters so I do urge all parents to read it carefully each week. Newsletters are all accessible on the school website so can always be viewed there if they are mislaid; all previous newsletters and the dates for the year are also on the website.

One date in last week's newsletter was incorrect: the **Year 7 Welcome Liturgy** that was listed for next Monday should have been taken out. Instead of a Welcome Liturgy next week we will be holding a Welcome Mass just before half term. More information about this nearer the time.

I said last week that I would report this week on the first meeting of the shadow governing body; I was a little ahead of time as the first meeting is at the start of October, not September, so news of this development will have to wait a few more weeks.

Uniform

You will recall that last year the students chose a new tie to coincide with our move into the new buildings and changing of the name of the school and logo. Year 7 students are now wearing the new logo on their blazers and we have enough available so that any student who purchases and new blazer can buy a new badge. These are £3.25 each and available from Student Services. Students who just want to change their badge for the new one may also do so whenever they wish.

I would like to remind parents of some other points concerning uniform. The first is that we no longer allow grey jumpers, trousers and skirts; only black. Already this has made a noticeable improvement in the appearance of the students. We are also enforcing the rule that jumpers and not cardigans should be worn – not a change, we had just become rather lax about chasing this – and that jumpers should be worn as well as blazers and not instead. Our students do generally look very smart and reflect their pride in the school but it is something that we all need to keep on top of.

I would finally like to mention again that boys should not have patterns cut into their hair. We are currently speaking to one or two who have done so over the summer but I would ask parents for your support with this.

Celebration of Achievement

On Tuesday evening we held this annual event when we acknowledge the successes of our students in the previous year. This was a splendid event, not least as we were this year celebrating our best ever GCSE results. The guest of honour was Bishop Michael and he congratulated the students who were present, representing achievement and effort in all years of the school. As well as the national examination successes we presented awards to students in every tutor group and for every subject, and it was pleasing to see such a wide cross-section of students represented.

The choir again performed excellently and I would like to thank the staff who prepared the evening, especially Mr Reilly and Mrs Austin, and the students who helped to announce the award winners. It is a pity that not everyone can attend but we took a lot of photos and these will appear on our website very soon.

Academic Tutoring

A significant additional element of our support for students is starting this term. All form tutors now have a lesson on their timetable which is to be used to interview students individually for 15 minutes about their work. These discussions will take place once a fortnight and so each student in a tutor group should have a meeting once a term. The discussion will focus on academic matters: classwork, homework the previous Progress Update, coursework, what is going well or liked, what is going less well and not so popular, and so on. The teacher will make some notes of the meeting and agree some points for action between one meeting and the next; a copy of these is sent home to parents with the student.

This new initiative is starting immediately across the whole school and not just with the examination years. This is because we believe that it will make a significant difference if all students have this personal attention occasionally. It is expensive to provide but, as I say, something that we believe is worth doing. It would be useful to have some feedback from parents as the year progresses.

Early Arrivals

Students should not arrive at school before 8.00am please. From this time until 8.30 only the library and dining hall, where breakfast is served, are open to students so they need to be in one or the other.

Sean Hayes

Achievements Last Year

It is appropriate as we start a new school year to make note of how much we all achieved last year. Despite the pressure of visits from Ofsted every term and regular checking by the National Challenge people we did make significant changes to the school, including:

- Changing the pattern of the day to four longer lessons from six shorter ones
- Rewriting the timetable to ensure that as many classes as possible were taught by subject specialists
- Increasing the amount of setting by ability
- Reducing the number of classes that were split between two or more teachers
- Launching a new school website
- Rebranding the school by changing the name, logo and uniform
- Introducing a new management information system to enable more accurate record keeping, central storage of assessments, electronic registration, and integrated examination entries
- A massive increase in the availability of ICT for students from less than 50 computers to over 300, all networked and with Internet access
- Changes to the support staff to increase the number of teaching assistants from 12 to 18, including an increase in the provision for EAL
- More regular and consistent reporting to parents so that information on progress is termly
- 1 to 1 tuition for some students, mentoring for others, and much closer monitoring of progress
- The use of specialist software to monitor the progress of Year 11 towards their GCSE goals
- A new Behaviour for Learning policy to enable students to enjoy lessons that are not disrupted
- A strengthened pastoral system with Student Support Officers becoming the key daily point of contact for year groups
- The introduction of a seclusion room so students could be removed from lessons and supervised rather than being excluded
- A consequence of the three previous points being a significant drop in the number of exclusions
- Much closer and more effective links with both the local authority and the diocese
- The introduction of work on social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)
- Improved processes for the induction of new students.

And there are many more things that we could go on to list. There is no doubt that the combined effect of all of this has been a greatly improved school and better examination results. This has been only one year and there is a lot more to be done, but other new plans will have to wait for another week.

Swine Flu Update

The government has issued revised guidelines for the new school year. It is no longer expected that schools and workplaces will close if students or staff have swine flu or its symptoms. If a student has swine flu parents should keep him or her at home, and if symptoms appear during the day we will arrange to send the child home. It is not necessary for children to stay away from school because they know someone who has swine flu or because someone who had been attending school has it. If this situation changes we will let parents know via this newsletter.

Student Librarians

Applications are invited from students in Year 8 who would like to serve as Student Librarians this year.

Duties will include:

- processing loans and returns
- recommending new books for purchase
- helping Year 7 students to make reading choices
- preparing and shelving new stock
- assisting with presentations to visitors
- organising display materials

These duties are undertaken on a rota basis during break and lunchtime and training will be provided.

Students wishing to be considered for the role should write a short letter of application addressed to The LRC Manager, to be received by Wednesday 23 September.

Parent Champion

Fr David Jennings will be in school and available to meet parents on Thursday 24 September at 3.30 pm.



Operation Christmas Child

I am sure you will remember how our students collected over 100 shoeboxes last year for the Operation Christmas Child appeal run by The Samaritan's Purse organisation.

This year we will be taking part again so could I ask you to save any shoeboxes that you or your friends or neighbours may have. Details on how to fill them will be provided later this term.

Thank you.

Mrs Pereira