



Government Changes

This week it feels like a case of 'another year, another Education Secretary'. The cabinet reshuffle at the start of the week has seen Justine Greening, the Education Secretary, resign. Not so many years ago education was seen as one of the most important sectors in government and a high profile job for a cabinet minister. With each change of personnel in recent years it seems to have slipped down the batting order to the extent that this week it was almost the last appointment announced.

After many years of change, much of which is only still in the process of being implemented, I do hope that the new Secretary of State does not seek to make his mark through further changes. Instead, I would like him to deal with the pressing issues of funding, university tuition fees, and teacher recruitment. There are also responses from several so-called consultations which have not been published months after they ended. At the top of the list for us is the cap on admissions to new faith schools, which is the current obstacle to opening new Catholic schools. Perhaps a change of leadership will result in some decisions on these issues.

St Thomas More Nursery

The rebuilding of the nursery has been taking place outside my office window for many months. This week the excited children moved into their new building, which looks bright and spacious. Bishop Alan will be formally blessing and opening the new building on 26 January. He will then come across to us in the afternoon to commission our new liturgy ambassadors and to bless our new Mission Statement. More about this nearer the time.

Applications for Year 7 next year

We have recently completed the process of ranking the applications from students in Year 6 for places here next year. There has been a very noticeable shift in the popularity of the school which means that we are very much over-subscribed now. For the first time we have more applications that have ranked us first or second choice than we have room for, which means the criteria of distance from the school will apply to those who have placed us second on their list of preferences. The criteria we use to rank applications have not changed, with practising Catholic students and those at feeder schools placed higher on the list, which makes it more important than ever that parents who want their child to come here do put us down as their first choice.

Parents Evening

Thank you to parents of students in Years 11-13 for attending this event on Tuesday; I hope that you found it useful. We will continue to monitor the students' progress and support them as we move into the second half of their courses. If you have any questions at any stage please do contact the school. We know how much difference parental support can make to each student's success so we aim to do what we can to support you in this.

House Cup

As we move into the second term of this year's competition, Westminster have a commanding lead:

Westminster	2951
Beverley	2658
Cambridge	2583
Rochester	2400

There is still a long way to go and many more competitions due to take place. Will Westminster be able to hold onto their lead, or will one of the others overtake them? We wait to see.

Sean Hayes

Year 9 Options and Parents Evening Tuesday 30 January 2.00 – 6.30 pm

Students were issued a letter this week about the Year 9 GCSE options process, which we have changed slightly this year. We have combined the options evening with the parents evening, to allow parents to find out about the subjects on offer at Key Stage 4 while also discussing current progress with subject teachers and suitability for courses.

Parents are expected to attend one 20 minute presentation and need to select a time slot on the letter. They can then book slots with subject teachers as usual around the presentation slot. The same presentation is being given three times during the afternoon to enable as many parents and students as possible to attend.

Any parents who have not yet received a letter should contact reception.



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Year 10 English Literature PPE

Next Wednesday morning Year 10 will be sitting an English Literature practice paper. English teachers have already made students aware of the exam and students have also received written notification of the seating arrangements. The PPE will begin at 8:40am. Students should make their way to the Exam Hall at 8:35am and be ready to start the paper at 8:40am. It is vital that students take this practice exam seriously and we expect everyone to come with correct equipment and behave appropriately in the exam hall.

Doddle Homework

Doddle is an online teaching and learning resource that allows students to access and complete their homework online, and provides access to hundreds of revision materials. We have been using Doddle in school with Key Stage 3 students (Y7-9) and have recently started to use it to set homework. We have previously trialled issuing parents of Y7 students with a Parent Key which allows them to log on to see what homework has been set and completed. As this seems to have worked well we are now rolling it out to Year 8 and 9 students. Y8 students will receive their Parent Logins via the post next week and Y9 parent logins will be included with students Assessment point reports which will be sent home towards the end of January. The system is fairly straightforward but should you have any issues please don't hesitate to contact us.

Year 8 National Science & Engineering Trip - Friday, 16 March 2018

The final deadline for outstanding payments of £10 for the Year 8 trip to the Big Bang Fair is Friday, 19 January. Payments will not be accepted after this date. Letters are available from Student Services. Mrs Udeaja

Attendance

Over 200 students were entered into a draw for a £25 gift card for achieving 100% attendance last half term. Many congratulations to Rigoberto Gomes for winning the prize draw.



We would like to thank Vision for Education for their ongoing sponsorship of this prize.

SJF House Competitions

"have life and have it abundantly"

John 10:10

Deal or No Deal was thoroughly enjoyed by all and there was a great turnout.



Thank you all for supporting your house.

The final points won were:

Rochester 100	Beverley 80
Westminster 40	Cambridge 40

Coming this half term

Dodgeball
Pop Pong



Energy Drinks

A reminder that energy drinks and any other caffeinated fizzy drinks are banned in school. They will be confiscated from students if seen.

**Academic Tutoring
Year 11
8 to 19 January**