

14th December 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

Headteacher: Mr A Hunter

Parents' Forum

Thank you to everyone who attended the Parents' Forum this week. We talked about the changes to the Year 9 options process and the KS4 curriculum. We also had an interesting discussion about the way that we allocate places to trips. We agreed that it would be helpful if the list of trips which is published at the start of the year (which isn't set in stone, but acts as a guide) could also be published on the website so that parents could plan in advance. We also agreed that it would be helpful to ask for expressions of interest well before a trip, so that we could aim to have as many places available as there were students who want to go. We felt that for big trips like the ski trip, students who have already been once should go to the bottom of the list for the next time around. We also agreed that, on balance, names out of a hat is the fairest way to allocate places. I found the whole discussion really helpful.

We then had a long discussion about the C system and zero tolerance. I was interested to hear what parents' perceptions are of the strengths and weaknesses of the behaviour policy. The main message from everyone present was that the system is clear and effective, which I was pleased to hear. However, there was also a feeling that there are inconsistencies in the way that it is applied. Parents said that having all students who have been given a C3 discuss it with a member of the senior leadership team didn't necessarily mean that the right conversations are always taking place between the classroom teachers and the students. Parents also thought that there should be some more flexibility within the zero tolerance system, so that different levels of sanction could be handed out for different levels of behaviour, which seems to be common sense to me. Finally, we all agree that any behaviour system which focusses mainly on sanctioning poor behaviour is missing out on the opportunity to reward all the hundreds of students who get everything right, every day of every week. We are currently undertaking a review of our behaviour systems and all of those insights will be extremely useful in that process.

Thanks again to everyone who attended. I consider the Parents' Forum to be part of our school leadership structure and I find the discussions we have there genuinely useful as we reflect on how best to lead the school back to a state of excellence everywhere. The next one will be on Wednesday 6 February at 6.30 in the canteen.

Staff

Mrs Merch-Chammon is retiring next week after many, many years of service to the school. Many of you will remember her from your own days at Samuel Ward. She has given an enormous amount to the school, to the students and to the community of Haverhill. I'm sure I speak for the entire staff and for many of you when I say that she will be very sorely missed. We wish her a very long and rewarding retirement.

The best way to predict the future... is to create it.

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At the end of this term, we will say goodbye to a number of other staff. Mr Mares is leaving MFL and Mx Jones is leaving science. Mrs Haynes is leaving the SEND department. I'd like to thank them all and wish them well.

We will be delighted to welcome some new staff to the school In January. Replacing Mrs Merch-Chammon as my new PA is Mrs Franks, who some of you will know from Wickhambrook Primary School. Mr Heinrich and Mrs Trevelyan are coming to the Science Department where they will join Mrs Lucas who started in Science a couple of weeks ago. Miss Lewis-Burling joins us as Deputy Director of English. Miss Shears is coming to work in Maths and Mrs Domene is helping us with Modern Foreign Languages two days a week – specifically Spanish GCSE. We will be welcoming two new cover supervisors - Mrs Tabrar and Mrs Taylor. We are also in the process of appointing two new learning support assistants this week.

Teaching School

We heard from the Department of Education this week that, following the standard review mechanisms, we have retained our prestigious status as a Teaching School. This is really very good news indeed because it allows us to offer teacher training both at our school and at other schools across the trust. Increasingly, schools recruit teachers directly from their pool of trainees, so the strongest trainee teachers often don't reach the open market. The retention of our Teaching School status means that we will continue to be able to train teachers the way we want them and, where we have a need, get a head start in recruitment.

Christmas

The Sixth Form Christmas Formal at Sturmer Hall has taken place. I'm told they all had a great time.

Finally, some reminders. Christmas lunch will be served on 19 and 20 December. We will have a Christmas Jumper Day on 19 December, when we ask students to wear a Christmas jumper with their uniform and contribute 50p to Save the Children. The Christmas Concert is on Thursday 20 December.

The last of term, will be a non-uniform day as usual, with funds raised from the £1 donation going to support the house charities: Help for Heroes, Make a Wish and Plan. On that final day of term, school will close for students at 1.00pm.

I'll end by wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful new year



Andy Hunter

Headteacher