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**Headteacher - Mr Barry Doherty**

**Deputy Headteacher – Ms Natalie Hancock**

**Assistant Headteachers – Mr Daniel Gent and Mr Alan Trainer**

1 October 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

### ***Student Council***

The new Student Councils are now thinking about the various needs and priorities for the coming year. We will continue to encourage all students to use them to encourage debate and ideas to ensure we are always an improving school. We plan to use these Councils to explore several themes this year. They include new topics to explore in our Citizenship and PSHE curriculum. Meanwhile, Ms Hancock will be leading our revival of the House System. This will involve thinking about virtues that we wish to associate with each House and then creating meaningful symbols for Glyme, Stour, Evenlode and Windrush. Many students are willing to consider being reassigned to Houses in order to 'level the competition' and if we go in that direction please be reassured that we would avoid there being any need to purchase new ties or other House related items. I intend to explore some thinking around school uniform and also respond to a request to consider a summer uniform for the very hot weeks of the year.

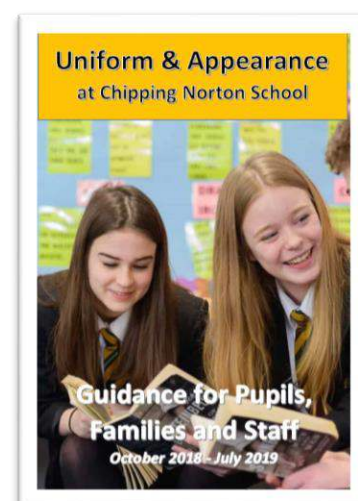
### ***School Identity***



As the school approaches its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday we are also going to be refreshing our branding and school badge so that it captures the school traditions and expresses our future goals. It is highly likely that from September 2019 we shall have a new school badge and that our (black) blazer pockets will look slightly different. Again, please be reassured that we would never expect families to replace items of school uniform that retained an older badge. There would be a period of transition lasting several years.

### ***Uniform and Appearance***

I have given a lot of thought to the extension I recently gave to families to be in correct school shoes by January. Whilst I have received many messages of thanks and support for this extension, I have also been asked to grant a longer period to support families and costs. After careful consideration I have decided to permit students to wear all-black trainers for the remainder of this academic year. This feels like the right step forward and allows us all to focus on the more deliberate breaches of our school uniform (please see below) and prepare us all for those much higher and clearer expectations from September 2019. In the meantime, please replace all future school footwear with the correct school shoes (not trainers, pumps, canvas, sling backs and so forth).



Last week I indicated that we were working on a fresh guide for us all on uniform and appearance. This is ready to be circulated and will appear on our website on Friday 5 October. Paper copies are available on request, or collected from the Main Reception. We hope the booklet will clarify everything for everyone and will be updated and recirculated every June/July – before most school uniform purchases are made for the new academic year.

Students have asked me to consider a summer uniform and I will take such a request seriously of course. This might entail a white open-neck shirt with the school badge, or a white polo-shirt with the school badge, for an assigned period of time in the late summer term.

As I explained to a Year 10 student voice group on Friday, all changes to school uniform are subject to a comprehensive consultation period with parents and carers, students and of course my colleagues. Changes are recommended to and then voted on by the Governing Body. This ensures they are *our* rules and *our* expectations.

### ***Emerging School Improvement Priorities – Part 2 of 4***




Last week I referred to the first strand of our emerging school improvement priorities – the knowledge-rich curriculum. I mentioned how this phrase captures the spirit of not only the nature of learning at this school (i.e. to know a great deal) but also *how* we all learn (by acquiring new knowledge, brick by brick, building higher and higher towers of wisdom).

If this priority feels like a return to embrace more traditional themes in education, then the second strand of our four main priorities is not. In fact, the second strand seeks to challenge some traditions and myths around how and why we use assessment in schools.

Every teacher's time is limited, very limited. Teachers work longer hours than ever before and we have reached a point where we have to ask more searching questions about what we are doing with our time as teachers. For every hour that we teach there tends to be a further two hours connected to that lesson – some for planning and some for marking, assessment or reporting. Right now, too many teachers invest so much time in their assessment and marking that there is not enough time to improve the way they plan their lessons in response to the work they have just marked.

Planning lessons is the most sophisticated part of a teachers' role. Great teachers think very carefully about how their lessons will unravel and how they will accommodate the needs of the students in their classroom. *How will I engage less interested students? How will I ensure that I meet the needs of the students with special educational needs? How will I help students understand this really difficult concept that so many struggle to understand in the past? How will I enable those students to produce answers that will be Grade 9 standards?* Sadly, often there is too little time available to plan those great lessons once all of the marking is out of the way, data is recorded and the books need to be returned tomorrow.

Going forward we will change the way assessment is used so that it is assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning.

-  Assessment **of** learning is the traditional stuff. It's when we mark tests or essays and then provide an estimated grade and clear advice on how it could have been even better.
-  Assessment **for** learning is more recent and has been widely used in schools for the past ten or more years. It involves teachers and leaders using assessment data to pick the hot and cold spots in students' previous learning so that we can re-teach or address those weak areas in the future.
-  Assessment **as** learning is more recent and will become a central part of what we do at Chipping Norton School. This involves assessment being something that is not done to students, but something they do with us or they do on their own. The evidence shows that students are far less likely to embrace or remember the comments we teachers write in their books or on their papers. They tend to focus on grades and test scores and learn much less from their teachers' written advice than we realised.

In the future your children will experience more multiple choice question (MCQ) tests that are based on knowledge organisers. Also, learning will be front-loaded (not 'revealed' lesson by lesson like an unfolding novel) and we will encourage and expect the students to read-ahead, think-ahead and learn-ahead – without a reliance on their teacher as a narrator of their learning. Those knowledge-organisers and MCQ tests will much more regularly cement the basic building blocks of wisdom for each module. Ticking and flicking through your children's exercise books can be helpful and look impressive, but knowledge-organisers tied to challenging MCQ tests will give both students and teachers much more regular feedback on what has been successfully learned and what needs to be re-learned.



In the future there will be a better combination of assessment *of, for* and *as* learning; with a greater emphasis on all teachers investing a greater proportion of their available time planning their lessons in response to assessment information. In theory, no lesson can ever be taught in exactly the same way in a teacher's career – every child is different and that is why every lesson is different. Learning does not progress in a neat linear fashion, like a train stopping at each new station. Learning moves along, yes, but swerves back, goes off at tangents before heading back on its broad intended course; less like a train and more like an aeroplane.

### ***The Hills Are Alive...***

With the sound of [Pachelbel's Canon](#), Mrs Tandy and I visited Year 8 during their period 2 lessons on Friday. A mixture of Science, Art, Drama and Music lessons were in progress and there was something very special watching two students reading music and making their keyboard produce a perfect rendition of a beautiful piece of music. It reminds us that school are truly wonderful places where children 'get to do' so many wonderful things and discover latent talents. Later that day, at 4pm, I was joined by Mr Ledgard-Hoile (Chair of the Governing Body) to listen to the Concert Band involving twenty-two students from every single year group, plus talented musician from Years 5 and 6 in partner schools.



Finally, thank you to all those students who are coming back to support Open Evening this coming Thursday, between 5pm and 8pm. School closes at 12:25pm on Thursday, with buses leaving at 12:40pm.



Yours sincerely

Barry Doherty  
Headteacher