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Monday 7 January 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back to a new term. We hope you and your children had a restful holiday and now return with renewed enthusiasm for the new term.

Obviously, it's a big year for our Year 11s and Year 13s – who begin their own rehearsal examinations very shortly. Meanwhile, the Year 11 GAP is about to commence and therefore there will be little time to waste for these students as we seek to make a sharp start to the year.

Following her maternity leave we welcome back Mrs Evans who will be resuming her role as our SENDCo. We are also delighted to also inform you that Mrs Smart has agreed to remain with us and will be our Assistant SENDCo going forward.

Communication Updates for Families

Starting tomorrow, you will receive a letter from each of your children's Head of Year. Our goal is to provide you with a termly letter setting out some key messages for particular year groups. It will include information on attendance, behaviour and the curriculum – by that we mean a very brief summary of the topics your children are about to study between now and Easter.



You will be aware that I have written to families each week since September and have felt the need to do so given my arrival as the new headteacher. I plan to reduce this to at least one letter per fortnight going forward, but will keep an eye on this so that you continue to be kept up to date with developments and news.

These letters supplement the traditional half-termly 'CNS Newsletters' and social media updates that all form part of our desire to help you remain aware of the wider life of our school. Meanwhile my own monthly newsletter to students adds an additional strand and this month's edition will be available from Wednesday.

First Student Council Conference – December 2018

Firstly, thank you to the 48 students who took part in our first conference under the title of 'building character'.

The day began by sharing some thoughts on the capacity of societies and communities to solve their own problems. Students were then placed in mixed age groups and listened to



short presentations from [THRIVE](#), [Katharine House](#), [Helen & Douglas House](#) and [Aspire](#).

They learned about their local work with deprived and homeless young people and families, or the care given to children and older adults in and around our community. We agreed to 'adopt' all four charities and make them the focus and the recipients of our fundraising for local charities going forward. Each one of our four houses will raise funds for their particular charity and try to find distinctive and related means to raise both awareness and funds. For example, students were interested in the sponsored sleep-outs that Aspire promote, which can enable students to think a little more realistically about the experience of being homeless.

Rev James Kennedy (St Mary's, Chipping Norton) and Dr Tom Simpson (University of Oxford) then led the main session on the development of character amongst students. Students began by thinking about the characteristics of people they admired. Inevitably, there was a wide range of views but some words were much more commonly expressed than others and this enabled students to 'sort' their words into the most valuable or important characteristics.

Consequently, words like generous, grateful, faithful, resilient, determined, empathic, discerning, attentive and intentional were deemed amongst the most important virtues of a human being.

This activity was linked to some consideration of how students would like to be described when they are 40 years of age. Inevitably, this involved them thinking about adults they know and perhaps their parents in particular. This was a challenging activity and resulted in some intriguing responses that perhaps revealed their inner personal goals. Responses included:

- Lives their life fully
- Has a positive impact /makes a difference
- Lives happily
- Gives
- Balances work and life
- Respects others and is respected by others
- Generous to others
- A good friend

Students were then asked to consider which virtues or characteristics were highly visible in our school right now, and those that were not.

Overwhelmingly, students felt that the school encouraged students to be very determined (above all) but also active, articulate, empathic, knowledgeable and believing in the good of others. In addition to the importance of using one's imagination and being outstanding in a crowd.

The students present felt more work needed to be done in other areas. In particular, promoting, celebrating and rewarding truthfulness, attentiveness and, above all, fascination.

In our final session we explored a range of topics that considered how the school might evolve or change in the years ahead in relation to rewards and recognition, behaviour and sanctions and the house system itself.

- With respect to rewards, it was clear that we need to introduce much greater variety in the way we recognise and reward students, being more conscious that different age groups prefer different ways to be celebrated.
- Similarly, in terms of behaviour and sanctions, students overwhelmingly valued consistency amongst all staff in the way that misbehaviour should be tackled and sanctions issued. Broadly speaking, the three strikes concept was very widely supported and the only tweak sought was greater consistency in its application in all lessons and amongst all teachers.
- Students acknowledged the impact of persistent low-level disruption amongst a small minority of students and sought greater action to prevent and discourage such behaviours. Attitudes towards detentions were mixed and in part affected by perceptions that detentions were given too freely by some and too rarely by others - or that students often forgot why they had been given a detention in the first place.

There was widespread agreement that the names of the four houses are a very important feature of CNS life and traditions and were worth keeping and then reviving.

After some experimentation and trials, there was a general consensus that it was almost impossible to assign the face or name of a single famous person to each house. Nevertheless, animals, colours and symbols were less problematic and worth pursuing.

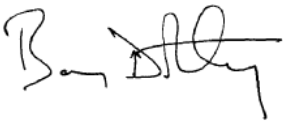
A smaller group will now volunteer to help arrive at some final decisions that include:

- Assigning a local charity to each of the four houses and agree ways and times that those charities will be supported in our school life.
- Establish the four houses with colours, symbols, virtues, charities and badges designed to promote a sense of belonging and character education.
- Review rewards and recognition at CNS.
- Review aspects of our behaviour policy to address concerns around consistency, detentions and promoting character development and awareness.
- Review how we encourage self-awareness of personal development through the introduction of a personal scorecard in 2019/20.

I hope you have found this summary of value and provides an insight into how the views and beliefs of our students will and must form a part of how we shape the school going forward.

Once again, I wish you all a happy new year and hope that 2019 brings us much happiness, contentment and success in all aspects of our lives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Doherty', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barry Doherty
Headteacher