



Leadership Team:

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Friday 13 December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

I welcomed your children back to the New Year with a start of term assembly in the main hall. It was my opportunity to help us all focus on our mission or quest at CNS and to reflect on why schools exist. I drew attention to those examples in history where children, particularly girls, children of colour and those who live in poverty have been denied access to education. I wanted us all to remember that a free and comprehensive education system exists in the United Kingdom to secure equal opportunities and promote social justice. In short, education sets us free – particularly when we embrace the gift of education.



Attendance Matters

We are really pleased to be able to report that attendance has now returned to 'normal', albeit two percent lower than re-pandemic norms. In response to the illness spike, we asked heads of department and teachers to review their start of term lesson plans so that we could accommodate those unusually high levels of absence and ensure every child was been able to return, catch up and press on.

The final twelve days of term aside, there was much to be proud of in our attendance last term; particularly so amongst our sixth formers, year 7s and year 11s – whose attendance compares extremely well with their peers in other schools. So far this year we have hovered at around 93% attendance, which is more than 2% lower than it ought to be – that's about twenty additional students off school every day compared to the pre-pandemic era. Whilst our attendance is significantly above local and national averages, we remain concerned about the impact of those absences and urge students and families to give their full commitment to high attendance at all times.

As I find myself feeling compelled to restate each time, we know that we can *all* face illness from time to time that requires us to be absent. However, the impact of those unavoidable absences is lessened if we have made it into school on other occasions when we might not feel 100%.

Behaviour Matters

I hinted at this next piece of information in my previous letter and am delighted to share with you that we have enjoyed a very sharp fall in the number of serious incidents at our school in the autumn term. We had the lowest number of suspensions on record and I cannot overstate the positive impact this has around the school and on those of us who are drawn away from other important work to investigate and deal with the consequences of poor behaviour.

There are many reasons for this wonderful achievement but it certainly reflects the spirit of collaboration we have in our school and the willingness of us all to get along and make good decisions every day. This is not to say that incidents do not occur or that everything is flawless. Nevertheless, my colleagues and I feel an enormous sense of gratitude and pride to work with the students at CNS and to enjoy the support we receive from parents and carers when things go wrong (and go right).



EVERYONE ACHIEVING EVERYONE BELONGING

Character Matters

As I repeated again in my assembly to all students this week, this school is in the business of helping to shape great young people. Whereas faith schools, for instance, may be united around assumed principles such as 'Gospel Values', a non-denominational school such as CNS has both a challenge and an opportunity to articulate what it seeks beyond the obvious decent examination results.

At CNS we talk about seeking courageous and compassionate hearts, alongside curious and creative minds. Our curriculum seeks to present a hopeful vision by drawing attention to human endeavours and achievements. We aim to encourage all students to possess a hopeful outlook towards themselves, others and the future.

With these goals in mind we are holding our rescheduled celebration assemblies next Thursday and look forward to recognising and rewarding individual students who have shone in different ways and have exemplified those virtues.

And finally...

When are students are present, when they are engaged, and when we are all committed to the same things, schools can become a very exciting place to be and we look forward to building on all those strengths and goals in 2023.

Yours faithfully



Barry Doherty
Headteacher