



Leadership Team:

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Friday 8 September 2023

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

Welcome back to a new term and we are all so glad that the summer provided an encore! It tends to be lovely in September but never quite this hot. I know many families appreciated the common-sense approach to blazers and jumpers this week. Nevertheless, please see my annual comments on uniform and appearance below.

Attendance Matters

Starting next week, I shall share the latest attendance data with you on a weekly basis so that we might raise our collective consciousness on this issue at all times. We have had a strong start but these are very early days. We hope to be one of those fortunate schools that can truly leap forward in a matter of weeks and not years by not suffering from entrenched low attendance that diminishes their children's life chances.

Whilst our overall attendance was higher than national and local averages last year, we had a higher than average proportion of students whose attendance was below 90%, and a very small number with 100% attendance – just thirty.

Please, please, please - like us - raise your expectations for your own children and, like staff at CNS, emphasise the importance of being here and restoring pre-COVID levels of resilience and determination.

We are doing so much more than ever before this year, to incentivise and reward 'streaks' of high attendance. Your children may have told you about our plans and may have also expressed some of the disbelief that we received as well: It is indeed true that we have gained the support of local businesses and the PTA to provide some great prizes that all students may win – the more streaks of unbroken attendance, the more raffle tickets they receive! Please look out for more information on this from our Attendance Manager, Mrs Whyte, in the coming days.

High expectations and our beliefs

As you might expect, our students took part in two types of assemblies in their first week back. The first, led by Ms Hancock, reminded our students of our expectations so that we can all feel we belong and so that all may achieve. It is really satisfying to note that we feel surrounded by really exceptional students who want to learn and be successful - and so those start of term reminders feel less and less like instructions and much more like our guides for a happier life at school.

In addition, I have also spoken to all year groups regarding our values and beliefs. I shan't bore you (too much) here on some of the educational theory that lies behind our current understanding of why some students are more motivated than others, but I provided the students with a simple summary of a great writer, by the name of Pips Mcree. His research showed that students are more willing to make those tiny personal sacrifices to be successful (e.g. doing revision and homework to the best of their ability) when two things are in place:

1. If children value education, if they believe that it is the root to happiness and freedom in later life, then they are much more likely to make those personal sacrifices because they know it'll be worth it.
2. If children go into their lessons with faith in their teachers and the curriculum, then they are also much more likely to make further personal sacrifices.



This year, more than ever before, we believe our students can possess immense faith in their teachers. Our summer 2023 results were exceptional and demonstrate what we can achieve when students are in front of us, when they are engaged, and are therefore guided by those wonderful teachers. You will be aware that I wrote to you in late August with details about our results and now provide a link to [the results page on our website](#) in case you are still unaware of our students' outstanding achievements.

High expectations in all things

On Monday, the temperatures are going to be back to 'normal' and that means we shall return with full expectations with regards to uniform and appearance. Again, we rely on parents and carers to carry out their own checks before their children leave each morning and so, please be particularly fussy and ensure they wear the correct footwear (shoes and dark socks) and remove additional jewellery and piercings. This also helps us focus entirely on the positives when they arrive and avoids us having to call you to bring in the correct shoes or other items. Full details regarding our [uniform and appearance expectations](#) appear on our website.

New term and new habits

The measure of a rest is surely how hard it is to get back into old rhythms? We tend to go a little gently on homework expectations in the first week or two; so that children and families can re-establish good routines for sitting down each evening to complete their homework. The amount of time we expect children to study independently at home increases as the child gets older. More information can also be found [on our website](#).

Open Evening 2023

On Thursday 5 October, we shall be holding our annual open evening for future year 7 entrants, from 5pm till 8pm. School will again finish early on that day (end of period 3 at 12:25pm) and we look forward to seeing hundreds of students back on the evening to acts as guides (years 8, 11 and sixth formers), or to participate in lessons, games and activities (years 7, 9 and 10). Our students are our biggest draw and so please look out for those requests for your permission and support in advance of the night. Students really do enjoy taking part because it can give them so much added social confidence, but also spend several hours in the subjects they love the most!

Major Dates in the Autumn Term

We try to avoid major changes year-on-year so that families can make plans and get used to the normal annual rhythms of school life. In order to help our newest parents and carers it is worth mentioning the following:

- Thursday 14 September: Welcome to Year 12 Evening – from 6pm in the main hall.
- Thursday 21 September: Welcome to KS4 Evening – from 6pm in the main hall.
- Tuesday 26 September: Years 7 and 8 'Meet the Tutor' evening.
- Wednesday 27 September: Years 9 and 10 'Meet the Tutor' evening.
- Thursday 28 September: Years 11, 12 and 13 'Meet the Tutor' evening.
- Thursday 5 October: School finishes early (at 12:25pm) for open evening.
- Friday 6 October: INSET day – no students in school.
- Wednesday 18 October: Final day of school before half term for all students.
- Thursday 19 October: Additional PTC for parents and carers of students with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Thursday 16 November: Sixth Form open evening from 5pm to 8pm – but no change to the school day timings.
- Thursday 30 November: Year 12 PTC (teachers, parents, carers and students)

- Wednesday 20 December: Final day of term and school finishes early (at 12:25pm).
- Tuesday 9 January 2024: First day of the spring term for all students.

Families will notice that we have extended the length of our PTCs so that more slots are available each night. This will apply to all PTCs going forward.

[Term dates for 2024/25](#) (as well as our [calendar](#)) are on our website and so that families may book holidays with peace of mind knowing they have not been booked during term time. For more information on [absence during term time](#), please see our website.

And finally...

I hope you enjoy this final (?) blast of summer over the weekend and really look forward to seeing your children again bright and early on Monday morning.

Yours faithfully



Barry Doherty
Headteacher