



**Leadership Team:**

Barry Doherty (Headteacher)  
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Dear Parents and Carers

We are very much back into the swing of things and look forward to some milder and brighter weather. I enjoyed delivering my start of term assemblies to years 7 to 11 last week and providing the tutor time programme for all year groups this week. My focus in both was linked to character and our four values: courageous and compassionate hearts, with curious and creative minds. I drew attention to President Lincoln's famous call to 'find the better angels of our nature' and reminded students that whilst examination results open doors, it will also be the hearts and minds of our students that an employer will want to explore.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday night, Mr James's annual Quiz and Curry night took place with record numbers and delicious food provided by Café Le Raj. All monies raised have gone to THRIVE and Thames Valley Air Ambulance. It was great to see the competitive spirit between sixth form and staff teams, not to mention the fancy dress that some decided to wear for this special occasion. Mr James has asked me to publicly thank the following local businesses who generously provided raffle prizes: Blenheim Palace, Cotswold Wildlife Park, Birdland, Whichford Pottery, Fairy Tale Farm, Cotswold Sweets and Junkyard Golf Oxford. And a special mention to Wilf, Fin and Mrs Chard for keeping score, Mrs Matthews's quality assuring and managing the quiz, and to the site and catering teams who made it all possible. Thank you!

As you might have expected, I intend to devote the bulk of my letter to you about Ofsted.

**Ofsted Report**

I hope that you have had an opportunity to read the recent Ofsted report, which now appears on [their website](#) as well. It can often be the case that schools are distracted by an impending inspection or even make decisions with an Ofsted framework in mind. You will be reassured to hear that whilst we have always recognised the absolute necessity of external scrutiny, we have also remained focussed on doing what is right for our school community.

You will be aware that Ofsted visited us back in May 2023 and [their report concluded](#) that, "There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now." As you know we were all very honoured by those words and I set out some responses to you [at that time](#).

Since that inspection, our A level and GCSE students went on to secure the two best sets of results in our school's history. I share this fact for a number of reasons, not least to emphasise that we have never (and will never) rest on laurels and become complacent: past success is no guarantee of future success.

As you know, Ofsted then returned in September 2024 and this led to us being graded OUTSTANDING in four out of five categories: behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, and sixth-form provision (again).

The report itself, albeit much shorter than the reports in the past, provided some really lovely comments that should mean a lot to us all:

- "The school's commitment to developing pupils' character is exceptional."
- "Pupils achieve well above the national average."



- (These outcomes are achieved due to) "...an ambitious curriculum that is carefully planned and skilfully delivered."
- "Pupils feel safe and enjoy their learning."
- "The school culture is highly respectful."
- "Sixth form students work with diligence and determination."
- "Staff receive ongoing high-quality training. Teachers are experts and are passionate about their subjects."
- "The school has high expectations for how well pupils and students achieve and conduct themselves."

Additionally, the school was rated 'Good' for quality of education. I cannot deny that this decision was somewhat of a surprise to us all, given [outcomes of all students](#) in recent years. Nevertheless, we discourage our students from relying solely on the external validation of others and therefore we move on...

The report itself indicates that CNS is on the right journey of improvement. Forgive the cliché but improvement is all about the journey and never the destination. Each new cohort or generation of students is different to the last. This means that we have to adapt all the time and stay on our toes. This allows our school to continually shift and grow to meet current needs, rather than the needs of students who have enjoyed success and have now left.

Which is to say that there is a great deal of what we do that we do well and shall continue to do so, albeit with incremental improvements and tweaks as each year passes. But there are also areas we wish to accelerate our impact and effectiveness so that we remain an inclusive school.

In my start of term assemblies with your children, I summarised 'our' commitments to your children, and was able to assure them that *if* they have faith in us, *if* they engage in classwork and independent study, and *if* they attend school on a very regular basis, then we are able to guarantee their success. We can weave more of that magic when students are in front of us and whilst we shall always seek to overcome the impact of short-term and longer-term absence, there is always a direct correlation between attendance and outcomes.

### *And finally...*

And what are the chances of *two* of our students, both in the sixth form, representing their country at an international ice hockey tournament right now? We look forward to finding how Tahlia Davidson-Wright and Elin Pereira-Morey get on with the Team GB ice hockey women's team and a write up of their exploits later this term. Good luck!

Very best wishes,



Barry Doherty  
Headteacher