



# Mr Morris' Seasonal Newsletter



Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for taking the time to read my first newsletter of the year. I am acutely aware that it is a huge responsibility to be overseeing your children's Middle School education. As someone who has grown-up locally and attended a local secondary school, I have a deep-lying desire to improve the life chances of children in this community. I often say to pupils I want the same for them as I do for my own children. This is something I repeat to parents and carers that I meet. The something that I 'want' is for them is choice. The choice to be whatever they want to be and do whatever they choose. My role, in leading Middle School, is to make sure that every child retains that choice and that choice is not lost to themselves or others. I want, and expect every child to fulfil their potential and support others in fulfilling theirs.

## Understanding the New Grading System

You will have heard over the summer that the new grading system of 9 – 1 has been introduced in English and Mathematics. This will now be the way in which all GCSE subjects are graded. To help you understand the implications of this, please see the table below that converts the 'new' to 'old'. It is important that both you and your children are aware that a 'standard' pass will not be enough to access many sixth-forms, colleges and apprenticeships. **In fact, if your child is awarded a '4' in maths or English, they will be told that they need to resit that subject at college.** In addition to this, in our sixth-form, to study A-Levels, we are asking for a child to have achieved a '6' in the A-level subjects they are hoping to study.

The most important thing for parents, carers and teachers, is ensuring that each child fulfils their potential. From an educational point of view, that potential is defined by how they did in their Year 6 SATs. Therefore, below, I have also included a table that illustrates the grade that your child should achieve in their GCSE exams. If you are unsure of the KS2 levels your child achieved, do not hesitate in contacting me.

New grading Structure	Old Grading Structure
9	A*+
8	A*
7	A
6	B
5 (Strong Pass)	C+
4 (Standard Pass)	C-
3	D
2	E
1	F/G

KS2 SATS Level	GCSE Grade
3	Grade 4 minimum
4	Grade 5 minimum
5	Grade 7 minimum

As you can see, there is a lot to understand. However, as the adults, we need to ensure that we are doing the things that we know will support them in achieving their best. So, we ask that you, keep checking that homework is complete, sign their homework diaries, ask them how they are doing and encourage them to see that school is the vehicle to a better future.

## Next Week's Mid-Season Assessments

Next week all pupils will be completing their Mid-Season Assessments. These are crucial assessments that will help to inform both teachers and pupils on the progress that is being made. In Year 9 and Year 10, a number of subjects are using these to set a baseline for the pupils so they can see where they started and then how far they have progressed. In Year 11, there will be much more of a focus on the examination skills that will be needed in just 9 months' time.

With Year 11 pupils, following those assessments, we will be looking closely at those pupils that are falling behind and not fulfilling their potential. The first step will be inviting in parents and carers of pupils that we are concerned about. This will be an evening event and will enable senior members of staff, parents, carers and pupils to look closely at the work that is being produced. Together, we can then guide pupils how to improve and inform parents and carers on the crucial part they can play in ensuring their child gets the grades they need to.



## **Homework Diaries**

As I am sure you will have seen, we have redesigned the 'Learning Journals' and rebranded them as 'Homework Diaries'. In doing so, we have made sure that they are more of a dialogue between home and school - as parents and carers, something we always crave. Many pupils and families have taken this in their stride. However, some pupils are still not getting these completed and this important dialogue is not happening. As Mr Bennett commented to a child today, there is a direct link between the quality of a diary and how well a child is doing.

Please spend some time with your child filling this out and talking to them about their work, their day and listen to them read. This is always the highlight of my day with my own children!

## **AimHigher NCOP – Mrs Hodgson**

Last year, AimHigher West Midlands, a partnership of Higher Education Institutions, Schools and Colleges, made a successful bid to the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), funded by the government. The programme is designed to help students from areas where the progression of young people to higher education is very low, despite good GCSE outcomes. This academic year, Colmers is lucky enough to be part of this programme and you will have received a letter and a leaflet about this if your son/daughter is to be part of the programme. The programme will deliver a wide range of university masterclasses and taster days as well as deploying a graduate ambassador, trained to work as a mentor and role model for Colmers Students.

We have been partnered with Birmingham University and our AimHigher Progression Ambassador is Ellie Hinds. Ellie hales from Tamworth, attending a school much like Colmers, although she spent 3 years in New Zealand when she was younger. Her Mum works in Finance and her Dad is a builder and she says that hard work and a passion for Sport is what led her to University. She has recently graduated from Birmingham University with a degree in Sport PE and Coaching Science and she will be spending 2 days a week with us, mentoring students in Years 9 and 10 as well as taking assemblies, liaising with parents and arranging outreach opportunities so that as many students as possible have the opportunity to experience University life from an early age.

By taking part in this programme we will make a real difference to the life chances of young people from families with no experience of higher education. Allowing students to take part in this programme will boost a young person's motivation to succeed, improve their exam results and increase their chances of entering a secure and professional career.

If you have already received your letter, please return your consent, which allows AimHigher to track your son/daughter's progress, to school or to the address provided on the letter. If you would like more information on this, please contact Mrs Hodgson at school.

## **Year 11 Revision Guides**

Many departments have been making revision guides available to pupils to purchase. Our Heads of Department will be making sure the ones that we suggest are the best for their courses. I am aware that this can become very expensive so please do not hesitate to contact me if this becomes an issue for you.

## **Year 9 Achievement Week**

Year 9 have had a great week and have had the privilege to be the first Year Group selected by Mrs Wilcox for our Achievement Week. Lots of raffle tickets, stickers and prizes have been given out to pupils to acknowledge the hard work and effort they have put into their work. In short, when a teacher goes into a Year 9 class they ask the question, 'Who is working hard?' Then, everyone who is named gets a raffle ticket and sticker. Simple, but effective! Everyone who has a raffle ticket or sticker, then gets rewarded with a meal at the end of the week, but only if they haven't been late, missed a day or picked up for a behaviour concern. During that meal, we give out all the prizes. Thank you to Morrisons, Rush, Skirmish Paintball Games and Boing Zone who have all provided prizes for this special event.

## **Parent Governors – do you wish to serve the community?**

We currently have two Parent Governor vacancies. If you are interested in joining our friendly Governing Board, please contact Mrs Shortland, Clerk to the Governing Body, on 0121 453 1778 for more information. Please be reassured that full training is provided.

Enjoy the weekend, Mr Morris