



# Headteacher's Half Term Newsletter



September 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

A big welcome back to the entire Colmers community at the start of a brand new year. A year we hope and expect to be even better than the last and move ever closer to realising the potential of every child at this school. In a change to recent years, my newsletter to parents and carers will now be released at the start of each new half term. Still six per year, but this year starting with a news and information-heavy "start of term special". Please read on to learn of our recent results and comments on the new school year including reports, assessments, homework, school uniform, behaviour and a big request of you...



Best wishes, Mr Barry Doherty (Headteacher)

## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

### Examination Successes

We are again immensely proud of our students' performance in their A Level and GCSE examinations. We all felt that the students were more hard-working, more committed and better prepared than any group of students we've ever had. This has to be the case in an era where it is getting harder and harder to get C grades and above. This fact will not be news to students (or yourselves) and we are proud that most of our students do not become complacent or expect success to be easy.

### A Level Results - more Colmers students off to university!

Our A2 results included a 95% pass rate, which the highest grades (A\* to C) being very high in Art (100%), Religious Studies (75%) and, in our most popular subject, Psychology (67%). AS results were showed the same level of high-grade success in English Language and Literature (75%), Geography (78%), Psychology (68%) and Religious Studies (68%). Our sixth form has now grown to over 100 students, studying three or four of ten subjects. Our sixth form is a symbol of our commitment to provide your children with every educational opportunity.



### GCSE Results - congratulations to our super students!

In terms of GCSE results, 58% of our students achieved the basics of a Grade C or above in both English and Maths. Getting one of those can be really hard, but getting both remains a high bar to get across. Individually, 65% gained a Grade C or above in Mathematics, with 76% gaining a Grade C or above in English Language and / or Literature. Other headline results includes very pleasing results in Biology, Chemistry and Physics which pass rates of 72%, 78% and 80% in these demanding subjects. Over one quarter of every single grade was a Grade A\* to B and illustrates how students of all abilities succeed at Colmers.



### Even Better If...

I am not sure our results will ever be good enough or that we will believe we have ever reached the edge of what is possible. This is because we know that we still have too many students who do not maximise their potential in spite of great teaching and learning opportunities. Year after year we see enormous levels of success amongst students of all abilities who are prepared to work hard and be committed at all times.

### Reports - some continuity and some changes

This year we shall be moving to four reports to parents and carers each year. These will be sent home in addition to at least two Monitoring Meetings – more if your son or daughter is in Years 11, 12 or 13. Each report will include their 'working at grades' and progress checks on all their subjects, alongside their attendance and punctuality percentages. In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> report will also be accompanied by the Personal Scorecard. See overleaf.



Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together and Challenging Mind-sets



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## Assessments – Vivaldi would be proud

Research has shown that teachers can put too much effort into the wrong things. By this I mean too much time ticking and flicking books and not enough time on planning carefully-targeted lessons or spending more time going through the results of assessments with children. We remain committed to practices that are rooted in research rather than routine and have therefore shaken up our assessment policy.

In simple terms there will now be four assessment seasons. Each one lasts exactly nine weeks.

- In week 4, your son or daughter will take a mid-way assessment in every subject that will help inform the teacher's planning and help each child realise what they need to do to have a successful season.
- In week 8, all students across the school will be having an "Assessment Week". This will affect all subjects and mirror the kind of expectation and pressure that students feel in the real examinations. During this week, all clubs and normal homework will be suspended and everyone will be expected to spend at least one hour revising each night.
- In week 9, students will receive all their new grades back and complete self-evaluation and target setting activities.
- In weeks 1 to 3 and weeks 5 to 7, teachers will carry out 'SPOC' checks on their work. This will involve us looking at their spelling, punctuation and grammar, presentation, organisation and completion.



At the end of each season we gather together the most up to date information on your children (during week 9) and then produce a report for you, as parents and carers. Our goal is to provide ourselves with better information to inform how we plan lessons. Better information to help students realise how to make the necessary improvements. And better information for parents to understand how well their children are doing and what we all need to do to be more successful.

## Homework and Homework Diaries – every lesson, every day, everyone!

Starting this September, there are some things about homework that have changed. The amount of homework your children receive each week has not changed. What has changed is that homework must be set in every lesson. This means that students will always return home with at least five pieces of homework per day. We have moved to this approach so that it is very, very simple for parents to monitor. If, when you check those homework diaries, your son or daughter claims to have had no homework please get in touch with the learning tutor to discuss this right away. We all know that the sooner children get into the habit of working quietly and independently outside classrooms, the sooner they will be able to maximise that potential I referred to above. Finally, every night your son or daughter ought to have 60-85 minutes of homework to complete. This is in addition to their own reading. Please ensure that you spend a few moments each week to check the diary and to sign it as well. If you do, you will increase the likelihood of your son or daughter being successful. On the other hand if you do not...

## The Personal Scorecard – capturing the soft-skills for success

### Your Personal Scorecard Explained...

	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	Not yet started
1 Attendance	No absence or lateness			
2 Punctuality	Always on time	Always on time	Always on time	Always on time
3 Attitudes to Learning	Always engaged and motivated			
4 Attitudes to Homework	Always completes homework	Always completes homework	Always completes homework	Always completes homework
5 Extra-Curricular Life	Participates in at least one extra-curricular activity			
6 Uniform	Wears school uniform	Wears school uniform	Wears school uniform	Wears school uniform
7 Equipment	Brings all necessary equipment	Brings all necessary equipment	Brings all necessary equipment	Brings all necessary equipment
8 Community Contribution	Participates in at least one community activity			
9 Reading	Reads at least one book			
10 House Points	Earns at least 100 house points	Earns at least 100 house points	Earns at least 100 house points	Earns at least 100 house points

We have now begun the second year of the Personal Scorecard. You will recall that this captures your son or daughter's wider skills and attitudes that will affect their life-chances: academically, professionally and personally. There are ten events and we shall be having two 'heats' this year; one in January and one in July. The areas that we focus on are: attendance, punctuality, attitudes to learning and homework and attendance, extra-curricular engagement, uniform, equipment, community involvement, reading and House Points.

You will note that every child, regardless of their ability, has the potential to beat every other child in the school – and to get a higher score each time. Please encourage them to look at their score from last year to work out where they are weak or unsuccessful.



## BELONGING TOGETHER

### **Aww-00000 - Wolves Win The First House Competition**



Our new house system is already one year old and we look back on a year where each house (Dolphin, Eagle and Wolf) won one of the three trimester competitions. Dolphin House recovered from the Autumn and Spring competition disappointments and won virtually every one of events in the summer competition. This shows how easy it is to catch up – and how easy it can be to fall behind. Despite the Dolphin's late surge, Wolf were crowned our first ever House winner by the narrowest of margins. In the end had just a handful of Dolphin or Eagle put in greater effort then the outcome would have been different. A perfect reminder that we are the sum of our parts; for better and for worse.



WOLF



DOLPHIN



EAGLE

### **Uniform and Equipment - thank you for helping us achieve a great start!**

It's usually that time of year when headteachers have a good old fashioned crack-down on uniform and standards. Well, this year we have been so proud of the way almost every single student turned up to school. We know that this reflects well on us all but particularly you, parents and carers, who play their role in enforcing the rules and expectations without a fuss.

### **Snacks and Packed Lunches - your kids are sweet enough!**

The proportion of students using our dining hall has again grown this year. Your children will be able to tell you about the redecoration work that has taken place, but it is the cheaper, healthier and wider options that are much more important (please see the July 2016 newsletter). Many students, including those who eat in the dining hall, bring snacks into school. As a school we ask that parents do not provide sugary products like sweets, fizzy drinks or chocolate bars.



Apart from the very real risks to their long-term health and wellbeing (please see the December 2015 newsletter), for most students it leads to hyper-activity. In some cases this causes their concentration or consideration for others to slip – only to lead to immense remorse once the sugar levels have slipped. Please, no sugary snacks.

### **Just Do It!**



Your children have been made aware of a very different approach to one type of misbehaviour at Colmers. Last year we saw another large fall in the number of fixed term exclusions ('suspensions' in old money), reports of bullying, senior staff detentions and serious incidents of misbehaviour all falling. This is of course wonderful!

But there is one thing that we, as staff, wish to focus on and completely eradicate at this school – *defiance*. In simpler terms, this means answering back or refusing to follow a reasonable instruction. Students have been made aware that if they defy a member of staff they will be given a warning and if this is not heeded then they will receive an automatic detention – to be sat with me each Friday night. I doubt that you would tolerate your children answering you back or refusing to do as they are told and this is no different at Colmers. Please support us in enforcing good manners and respect for others.

### **Calling All Parent Governors - your school needs you!**

Particularly following the arrival of our new Year 7s and their families, we again call for parents and carers to become parent governors. Apart from a really good cup of tea, some biscuits and charming company, you will have an opportunity to be at the heart of school life and help us all raise standards at Colmers. Full training is provided and you will work alongside decent people who will make you feel comfortable and welcome. Please consider joining us and get in touch with the Clerk to the Governing Body, Mrs Teresa Shortland on [tshortland@colmers.school](mailto:tshortland@colmers.school).





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## Sports Day - Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016

At the very end of last year we had our first new-style sports day with us all spending a fun day on the Belton Grove playing fields and completing the full array of sports competitions in Houses in the hope of winning the inaugural House Sports Day Cup.

Every pupil in the school competed in traditional and fun athletic events so that every person could contribute to their House, irrespective of athletic ability. The event was a huge success, clearly demonstrating how sport can be used as a vehicle to inspire and motivate young people. Every competitor gave their all and it truly showed how Colmers' pupils rise to challenges and give 100% for themselves and others.

After a closely run series of events it was Eagle House who came out on top and won the first Colmers House Sports Day. I'm sure that next year will be an even greater success and that Wolf and Dolphin will want the cup for themselves.



## CHALLENGING MIND-SETS

### Will your child be successful this year? *Free Crystal Ball and Star-Gazing...*



Every parent or carer begins the year by asking how well this year will be compared to the last. As each year passes in my career as a teacher I have come to more clearly understand that your children have far more control over their destiny than they or we dare to believe. Like it or not, the amount of reading, homework and revision your child completes will have far more impact on their levels of success than anything else in their life.

My role is to ensure that every child receives a great learning experience and provide back-up support for those times when life and school is harder than it ought to be. But, in the end, a child who experiences less monitoring, lower expectations or fewer compliments from home will always be at a disadvantage compared to those families who check-up, demand, reinforce, praise, reward and expect their children to do well.

It's not family income, family wealth, access to computers or house size that has a bearing on your son or daughter's success – it's how much you and we expect them to do well. The higher our expectations the higher their achievements.

Please, this year, more than ever before, **let's surround Colmers children with adults whose expectations are only exceeded by their commitment to do everything possible to encourage every child to be their best self.** It's what we owe them and it's what they deserve.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

-  Thursday 22nd September *Open Evening*
-  Thursday 29th September *Presentation Evening*
-  Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October *Sixth Form Open Evening*
-  24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October *Half-Term break*
-  Monday 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November *Autumn Season Assessment Week (All Year Groups)*
-  Monday 14<sup>th</sup> to Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November *Year 11 Work Experience Week*
-  Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December *INSET Day*
-  Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December *Monitoring Meetings (2pm till 7pm / all Years)*
-  TBC December *Colmers' Night At The Musicals*
-  Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December *Last day of the autumn term*
-  Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January *First day of the spring term*
-  Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January *Winter Season's Assessment Week (All Year Groups)*

