

HEADTEACHER'S HALF-TERM NEWSLETTER



October 2011

Dear Parents and Carers,

The Start of Term

September and October have been very busy with major school events that include our Open Evening for prospective parents, and our Key Stage 3 and 4 welcome evenings. Meanwhile we welcome on to our staff several new colleagues. These include Ms Galibert (Languages), Ms Clayton (English), Mr Bodels and Mr Howard (both Mathematics), Ms Carney, Ms Quinn and Mr Finch (Teaching Assistants) and Mr Beasley (ICT support staff).

In addition, Mr Bennett has become the new Head of Year 8, whilst Mrs Meredith has become Head of Performing Arts. Congratulations also to Mr Morris (Head of English) and Miss Bridgewater (Head of Key Stage Three) who have taken up post as Associate Assistant Heads with responsibility for Assessment for Learning and Gifted and Talented provision, respectively.

During the summer term Mrs Docherty and Mr Boardman were successful in their application to become Assistant Headteachers, against a field of well over 100 very well qualified applicants. Mrs Clinton, meanwhile, has taken up post as the Leadership Team Secretary.

Mrs Docherty and Mr Boardman join myself, Mrs Pavey (Deputy Head), Mr Adams (Acting Deputy Head), Mrs Beale (Assistant Head and SENCo), Miss Bridgewater (Associate Assistant Head and Head of KS3), Mr Hodgson (Head of KS4) and Mr Morris (Associate Assistant Head and Head of English) on the school's Leadership Team.

Finally, the Governing Body and I wish to congratulate Mr McNougher (Assistant Head) on his permanent appointment as the new Deputy Headteacher at Frankley Community High School. Mr McNougher takes up his post with immediate effect and will be greatly missed by generations of students and staff for his talent and passion for education - and his amazing assemblies!

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

On behalf of the Governing Body and staff at Colmers, I also wish to congratulate our most recent Year 11 leavers - whose *results were the best ever* in the school's history:

- The percentage of students leaving with five or more GCSEs including English and Maths rose to 57% (up on last year's 55%).
- The percentage of students leaving with five or more GCSEs rose to 92% (up on last year's 87%).
- Despite there being a national issue around boys' underachievement, at Colmers the 'gender gap' was very low – a mere 2%.
- Compared to similar students in similar schools, our students perform well within the top 10% of all schools nationally – up again on last year.
- Other measures of individual student performance are also very markedly up, including average points scores and students making three or more levels of progress. This offers a better snapshot of how all students achieve and progress within a school.

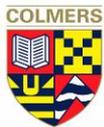
These headline figures are of course very encouraging for all within the Colmers community.

Nevertheless, the focus remains on **raising the bar** for all students at Colmers, **and closing the gap** between our most and least successful students. As I explained to our prospective parents at the Open Evening in September; our previous bests will become our minimum expectations.



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE BY **BELONGING TOGETHER** & **CHALLENGING MIND-SETS**





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BELONGING TOGETHER

Uniform:

My colleagues and I were very, very impressed with the standard of uniform and appearance of our students for the start of term and I want to express my thanks and appreciation to all families and carers in ensuring our students remain smart and correctly dressed. At the start of each half term we shall, of course, be checking all uniform, appearances and equipment to ensure all students adhere to our expectations. Again, if unsure - please ask.

Sixth Form Consultation:

It is fair to say that our announcement to students that we are examining possibilities of a sixth form at Colmers, created some excitement and anticipation. It is my strong opinion that we must give careful and thorough thought to the introduction of a sixth form college here at Colmers since it has the potential to further raise standards at this great school by providing opportunities for students and staff that could have far reaching gains right across the school community.

We have been very grateful for the survey responses that have been returned by parents and look forward to a thorough analysis and evaluation of these (and other consultation lines) during the month of November.

In due course I shall write again to parents and outline the outcome of our consultation and set out, if agreed, a proposal for the introduction of sixth form provision at Colmers. Public meetings held on Monday 3rd and Friday 7th October were well attended by parents (and some students) and a very useful and informative occasion was therefore created to learn more about how such a sixth form might be introduced. Nevertheless, the introduction of such provision is complex and cannot be rushed and therefore we do not envisage provision being sought before September 2013.

School Prize Evening:

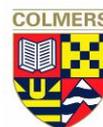
Considering the array of big events in the first half term, I have decided to reposition our annual Prize Evening event to later in the year so that we could give the occasion the fuss and ceremony it deserves. This year's event, therefore, will take place on the evening of Thursday 1st December 2011 – with a Christmas feel! Students nominated for prizes will be notified shortly after half term.

Parents' Survey:

You may recall that all parents and carers were invited to take part in an annual survey. Approximately one third of all families took part; twice the national average. Many thanks for taking part!

The results of that survey are included below and the results are very encouraging indeed. I have provided you with national data so that we can make robust comparisons with all schools nationally.

Your strongest responses include statements: 1, 2, 3 and 12. Your least strong responses include: 10, 11, 14 and 15. If you have a particular issue, recommendation or concern in any of these areas please contact Mr Boardman (Assistant Headteacher) on cboardman@colmers.bham.sch.uk. He will be able to tie your comments closely to our 2011/12 School Improvement Plan.





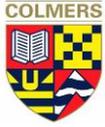
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Parents' survey cont'd...

Statements <i>(No's 1 to 11 based on the current Ofsted parents survey)</i>	% Combined Strongly Agree & Agree	National Comparison	% of Parents that disagree
1) My child enjoys school	96%	85%	4%
2) The school keeps my child safe	96%	93%	4%
3) The school informs me about my child's progress	98%	91%	3%
4) My child is making enough progress at this school	95%	91%	5%
5) The teaching is good at this school	96%	90%	4%
6) The school helps me to support my child's learning	92%	86%	8%
7) The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	94%	87%	6%
8) The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future	95%	88%	5%
9) The school meets my child's particular needs	95%	89%	5%
10) The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	91%	85%	9%
11) The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	93%	84%	7%
12) The school is led and managed effectively	98%	Not Available	3%
13) Homework is set regularly	90%	Not Available	10%
14) The homework that is set is valuable and worthwhile	91%	Not Available	9%
15) The level of work set for homework is appropriate for my son / daughter	92%	Not Available	8%
16) Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95%	Not Available	5%
		About right	Too difficult
17) Overall, the level of work my son / daughter does at this school is:	92%	3%	2%





CHALLENGING MIND-SETS

Early Closure / PEG Wednesdays

All staff at Colmers School settled in well to our first early closure Wednesday on 5th October. Our time was invested very carefully in planning our year ahead and agreeing the most important actions that would lead to further school improvement.

In addition, we all selected our first batch of PEG groups. 'PEG' stands for a "Professional Enquiry Group" and is, in short, a group of teaching and non-teaching staff gathering together to learn about an aspect of their role that they have identified as a personal need for development. During the course of an academic year, each member of staff will be able to select two or three PEGs – choices that are driven by a strong awareness of particular areas they wish to improve upon or develop. Like every other professional, all staff at Colmers recognise that they are lifelong learners and that unless we update our knowledge and skills we become less effective over time.

Because Colmers' best days lie ahead, we have set out a comprehensive programme of professional development activities for all staff at Colmers. Our PEGs are wide ranging and include the following areas for learning and action research:

- Promoting greater creativity
- Gifted and Talented provision
- Higher Order Writing & Thinking Skills
- Behaviour for Learning strategies
- How to create an outstanding lesson
- Understanding autism
- Getting to grips with Office 2010
- Leadership and management development
- Coaching techniques
- Assessment for Learning

The culture of lifelong learning amongst all staff at Colmers goes hand in hand with our aspiration to become a national leader in education and a world class school. To do this we must become a genuine community of adult learners, committed to our own and other's lifelong learning.

The Governing Body

Each year the Governing Body invite all parents to consider joining the Governing Body of Colmers School. The main body meets six times per year and provides parents with a great opportunity to become more involved in the life and decision making of the school. If you are interested in finding out more then please contact Ms Teresa Richards, Clerk to the Governing Body, on 453 1778.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Dates for Your Diary

- School closes for half term on Friday 21st October 2011.
- The school will be closed to students on Monday 31st October 2011 for the third (of five) staff INSET Days.
- Early closure Wednesdays will operate on the 2nd November and 7th December.
- Prize Evening will take place on Thursday 1st December 2011 at 7.00pm. Details to follow from Mr Adams after half term.
- Late December: Autumn edition of the Fanfare school magazine.
- Break up for Christmas at 2.00pm on Friday 16th December 2011.
- Students return to school on Wednesday 4th January 2012 – for all students and staff.

