

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

**RE: LETTER 3 OF 5 – LOWER SCHOOL**

With the focus on attendance and behaviour on Monday and Tuesday of this week, the remaining focus will be on Lower School (Year 7 and 8), Middle School (Years 9, 10 and 11) and Upper School (Years 12 and 13) in the coming days.

The recent Ofsted inspection, followed by a peer review of The Bridge just two weeks later, combined to give us some much-needed external views on our new school within a school. Ofsted wrote:

***“Recognising that many pupils need to accelerate their progress in literacy and numeracy, leaders have developed a new curriculum for Years 7 and 8. They have renovated a building so that pupils in key stage 3 have a stimulating environment which is a bridge between primary school and high school. The new ‘Bridge’ curriculum for Years 7 and 8 is delivered by highly effective specialists. As a result, pupils are making good progress. They are becoming better prepared for their GCSE courses because their basic skills are more secure. This new curriculum and facilities have been in place for a relatively short period of time and are very different from previous arrangements. Leaders are monitoring this new curriculum diligently to make sure that it continues to improve pupils’ experiences, and acknowledge the need to continue to do so.”*** (Ofsted, January 2018)

The Bridge is still only six months old but is already proving to be the initial success we knew it would be. But is it really delivering on what we hoped to achieve?

***The good news...***

We have growing evidence that children in Years 7 and 8 are making more rapid progress than in the past and this is partly because our new English and Maths primary specialists are ensuring that we pinpoint precise weaknesses, rather than covering old ground and wasting precious time. Students are writing more, with greater complexity and showing significantly higher levels of stamina and resilience. Attendance is better in Lower School than in any other part of the school and behaviour is very good and exceptional in Year 7.

An inspection, peer review, lesson observations and learning walks point to a lively and inspiring school life for our youngest students:

***“Some teaching is inspirational. Where it is, pupils’ work is prolific and strikingly well presented, and their progress rapid. Pupils at key stage 3 thoroughly enjoy the way in which the curriculum combines subjects to develop their deeper understanding of the world. For example, in a music lesson seen by inspectors, the teacher had a contagious passion for the subject. Pupils were highly engaged in their work and understood the links between musical discipline and effectiveness in life.”*** (Ofsted, January 2018)

***So, how are we going to improve?***

We are always wary of one size fits all solutions. With well over 200 children in each year group we cannot afford to have a curriculum that serves the needs of the many and ignores those of the few. This is why we have decided, 12 months ahead of schedule, to refine The Bridge curriculum and ensure that all students’ needs are fully met. We will do this by creating two pathways for students at the end of Year 7.

**HEADTEACHER**  
Mr Barry Doherty

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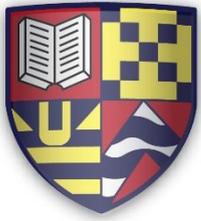
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The majority will continue to enjoy The Bridge's seven-part curriculum (English, Mathematics, My World, Explore, Create, French and PE) whilst those whose assessments have shown GCSE readiness, will follow a slightly different curriculum that will ensure they are further propelled towards success in Years 11 and 13. We are also mindful that a minority of current Year 7 students will not be ready to commence all of their GCSEs in Year 9 and therefore in the coming 12 months we shall design a third pathway for those students so that their needs and goals continue to take centre stage when they reach the end of Year 8.

***What must we do?***

- Students:** The vast majority must *continue* to work hard, complete homework and behave at all times. Less mature students have to catch up with their classmates and show the same levels of awareness about what to say and do at school.
- Families:** We ask that your mentality from primary school stays the same and that you maintain your confidence in approaching us and ensuring that your children read every day and get used to the daily habit of independent study that will make or break their success in their GCSEs and A-levels.
- Colmers:** We will not take our eye off this particular ball and ensure that the first six months of success is matched by what happens in the next six years. One of the ways we will do this will be by constantly reviewing our curriculum offer but also seeking to make closer links with our four main partner primary schools so that there is an ever-improving transition process.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Doherty, Headteacher

