

9 February 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

FEBRUARY HALF TERM 2017

Although this is a very short half term, a great deal has happened in the life of our school community. Just before Christmas, Kier our contractors handed over to us the back half of our building. We now have the full facilities of the new school and both staff and students are enjoying the new accommodation and equipment. Various services are in the process of being commissioned and we are starting to enjoy the excellent learning environment.

Over the last half term we have had a number of special visitors and events. Highlights have included:

- A visit from Mark Robinson coach of the England Women's Cricket team. Mark brought with him a tremendous message about the value of hard work and pursuing dreams and ambitions.
- Environment Day: On Friday 13 January we had a special focus on the environment across the curriculum. Mr Tsoumparis led an interesting assembly and curriculum areas explored different environmental themes throughout the day. There was a particular focus on our local environment and how the town has developed through the years. As a result of Environment Day, we have launched a popular environment club in school.
- World Day: a celebration of different aspects of world culture through the curriculum with a final 'whole school' performance.
- A fascinating visit from a representative of the Jewish community to talk about Jewish teachings, beliefs and practices.
- PC Wakelin visiting the school to reinforce our message about safety and the harm caused by cyber-bullying.
- Mr Jackson and Mrs James leading a poignant assembly to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- Several important sporting fixtures, including a competitive match against our sister school.

This half term is a busy time for staff recruitment and I am delighted with the quality and calibre of staff who we have appointed to important leadership, teaching and support posts. Many potential candidates have been to visit the school and every single visitor went on to apply for a post with us. Our students have been great ambassadors for their school and have taken a full part in the process of appointing new staff. Without exception, candidates invited for interview have commented on the poise and confidence of our students as they have served on interview panels or acted as tour guides.

After the half term break we look forward to:

- Completing the Year 8 options process.
- The Year 8 progress evenings.
- The Year 7 trip to watch "Gangsta Granny".
- The March Tirabad trip.
- Launching our annual parent and student surveys to help us understand what we are doing well and what we might improve.

Crescent Road and Parking

Crescent Road is a busy road and I would like to ask for your continued help in ensuring that our students get into school safely. Please could I ask parents and carers to be considerate in the way that they park. We have had a number of complaints from local residents about cars parking across driveways and impeding access. Our neighbours have endured a great deal with the building of the school and so I would ask you to be considerate and mindful of their needs. We encourage cycling to school and use of public transport but if you do choose to drive your child to school, please could I ask you to consider dropping your child a five minute walk away from school. If all parents did this congestion would certainly be eased.

Healthy Food

Students are able to bring food and a drink into school to have at break time. Please could we ask you to ensure that your child brings a piece of fruit or a cereal bar and a non-fizzy drink. Chocolate, sweets and fizzy drinks are not allowed. Please be aware that chewing gum is absolutely prohibited.

Attendance and Punctuality

Unless your child is genuinely poorly or has an unavoidable appointment, we would expect them in school. Any planned absence should be alerted to the school office via letter or email and we would ask you to contact the school first thing in the morning to report an absence due to illness. If your child requires a routine appointment, please could you arrange this during school holidays or after school hours so as not to disrupt learning. The school day starts at 8.40am and students are encouraged to be in school in good time. The vast majority of our students are well organised and are in school on time, keen to begin the day. A very small number of students are a few minutes late and we have been encouraging them to leave their home a little earlier in the morning or catch an earlier bus.

Critical Incident planning

The safety of students, and indeed all those on site, is of paramount importance to us. We regularly review our procedures for dealing with events which may put people at risk – including fire, flood, intruders on site, gas leaks. We refer to these events as ‘critical incidents’.

Part of our review process is to carry out evacuation drills and also drills where we feel the best course of action is to keep students and staff inside a building either until the danger is past or prior to evacuating away from the school. We will be carrying out one of these ‘lockdown drills’ after half term.

If a real critical incident were to occur, we would update parents via text, email and/or social media or the website as frequently as possible as events progress and subject to advice from the emergency services. In these circumstances, it will be important to keep lines of communication open and we would ask parents not to ring in or come to the school at that time.

During the drill we will **NOT** be contacting all parents. Below is a copy of the information we will go through with students explaining the drill. It would be very helpful if you could go through this with them so they are prepared for the drill but also understand its purpose.

*In the event of a fire alarm you all know exactly what to do - you go to the assembly point calmly and without a fuss and wait in the tutor groups in silence. We also need to practise what we would do if we ever needed to keep you safe **inside** the school. This might be because of a gas leak, a dog on the loose or a dangerous intruder. This situation is called “lock down”. In the event of a lock down we will send a message to all staff by email and text and a notice will pop up on computers and whiteboards. We will ask teachers to close doors and windows but otherwise lessons should carry on as normal until further instructions are sent or there is an all clear message. Staff may also ask that you put your mobile phones on the desk as it is important that we keep lines of communication clear, or we may ask you to switch them off. We will be having a practice drill one day this week. This should not affect your lesson but you will be aware that something is going on.*

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school.

May I wish you and your family well for the half term break. School resumes on Monday 20 February at 8.40am.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr A Johnson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr A Johnson
Head of School (Acting)