



10 February 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

Well, we've reached half-term!! The mornings and nights are getting lighter which is a relief even if the temperatures are still wintry, it does feel like we are emerging from the darkness of Winter.

Year 9 Options

One of the school calendar events that tells me that spring is on the way is the annual Year 9 options process. Following a well-attended options information evening two weeks ago we had a most positive Year 9 Parents' Evening on Tuesday evening. Additionally, on the previous Thursday, Ms Biddiss and Ms Shepherd had visited the Weller Centre on the Amersham Road estate to support some families who struggle to travel. In all these cases it was so heartening to see students in attendance with their parents. The chances of success are always enhanced by a trinity between school, the parent and the student and judging by the conversations that were taking place on Tuesday this was very much in place. With 100% of the options forms in by the end of the day on Thursday (this was deadline day!) I have been delighted by both the way the process has been organised, communicated and received by all stakeholders. My thanks go to Miss Bliss, Ms Biddiss and the Year 9 team for all their work in this matter. It's now over to Miss Bliss to try and make the options work!!

OFSTED!

I had a call from OFSTED this week which was initially heart quickening before becoming very pleasing. A Senior Inspector from OFSTED called to say she was compiling a subject report on History and on the back of our inspection last summer wanted to visit to look at our work as a piece of 'best practice'. Certainly, our curriculum has been hugely overhauled in the last few years with highlights including a comparison of the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution and the Haitian slave uprising of 1804 and a depth study of Barbadian immigration into Reading in the 1970s. We have also worked hard to ensure our GCSE syllabus links well with our areas of study in Key Stage 3 providing a very rounded five-year journey into the subject. We can't wait to meet the inspector after half-term and I will update you on the visit in due course.

Ski Trip

Good luck to our skiers who are departing this evening for 7 days of wonderful skiing in Austria. Fingers crossed everyone comes back in one piece, with tales aplenty of rapid descents, deep powder and great fun being had by all. My thanks to Miss Bliss, Mr Hunter, Mr Baker and Mrs Allen who are giving up their half-term to give our students such incredible experiences and for Mrs Walker for all her organisation and leadership for this escapade.



Strikes

Please be reminded of the intended industrial action by the National Education Union that is due to take place on 02 March, 15 March and 16 March. Whilst I do not have firm plans in place at present, I would expect that the school will be closed for many students if the level of industrial action remains the same as on the previous strike day. MECE families should plan accordingly if this industrial action takes place.

Young Writers and aiming high!

As you can see from the photograph below, we have a large number of scribes who will be having their work published in a Young Writers anthology. It's great to see so many of our students aiming high and working hard towards their academic dreams.



Furthermore, I thought it worth mentioning that whilst interviewing Maths teachers yesterday, one candidate remarked that they were taken aback by how capable our year 7 students were in comparison to the Reading school they were currently working at.

Subject champions

As a school, we like to recognise students for their talents. We recognise that some students have a deeper passion for some subjects than others within a scholastic setting.

As such, we are launching the subject champions programme. The subject champions programme will give leadership, enrichment and opportunities to students identified to be gifted and talented within each subject. The entire faculty has been involved in identifying these students and we will be notifying parents of these students after half-term. Students will receive a badge to wear on their blazer during my Headteachers assembly and will meet with the Head of Departments in the first week back. They may be given a task to do in addition to their regular homework, or be asked to volunteer to complete a certain task. This is an exciting development within the school community, and I look forward to seeing badges worn with pride on blazers and students developing leadership and knowledge in their identified passion.

Phones

I want to use this opportunity to remind parents that students are not permitted to use their phone in school and this includes phoning home without staff permission, whatever the circumstances. If a call home is considered necessary, the school staff will organise this. Any students using their phone without permission are required to hand it over to a member of staff and on the third occasion this happens parents will be asked to come and collect the phone in person. Phones are a distraction from the purpose of school and cause a variety of behavioural distractions, and I trust I have your support in this matter.

Uniform and Tools for Learning

As ever, I hope all families can use the holiday to get new shoes where needed, top up on Tools for Learning, purchase new clothing and get ready for our return to school on Monday 20 February.

Please see below link to our uniform and Tools for Learning website pages to help you in making the correct purchases:

[Tools for Learning](#)
[School uniform](#)

Lastly, a reminder that nose and other facial piercings are not permitted and only one simple small hoop or plain stud is permitted in each ear. Many thanks for your support in this matter.

Stars

My student star of the week this week is **Harry W** in Year 11. Harry has really turned things around and if I compare him to the earlier versions of himself in Year 9 and 10 we see a transformed young adult who now realises his potential and is striving to make the most of his GCSE year. Harry was recognised by Mrs Ashley this week in assembly, and it made me proud that he has done so well within our MECE family.

My staff star of the week is **Mrs Ashley**, our Head of Year 10 and 11 and Food Technology teacher. This week the Year 11 Food students have been completing their practical assessments and it has been an adrenalin fuelled week for Mrs Ashley which she has taken in her stride, delivering a fine assembly to her year groups in addition as well as managing the day to day duties of a pastoral leader.

Have a great half-term to all our MECE families and I hope everyone can find time to slow down and spend some phone free family time together over the next 10 days.

I will leave you with the quote I gave to Year 10 and 11 in my morning address on Thursday.

Best wishes



Andy Hartley
Headteacher

