

NR/CH

19 July 2019

Dear parents and carers

Here we are again - another school year over and it has been a very busy one and an extremely productive one.

The great thing about working in a vibrant school is that no two days are ever the same. It's a wonderful, lively and sometimes challenging environment, filled with hundreds of young people who are friendly, supportive and very, very talented. It's a real joy to be around them.

Highlights of the year? Every day there's a highlight, whether it's big or small, but some of the things that stick out for me are:

- Seeing two of our Year 8 students win their groups at the Voice North of Tyne celebration day at the Gosforth Park Hotel.
- Year 4 transition days – it's always uplifting to meet our new students and we have a wonderful group joining us in September.
- Years 5 and 6 parents' days, where parents joined in as a class in lower school for a day. They lined up on the yard before first lesson, went to assembly and played out at breaktime!
- Our 'Create' exhibition, including the fashion show – complete with a lit runway! This year we were also treated to a drama performance by a very talented group of Year 8 girls, which was focused on anti-bullying. Expertly acted and very powerful.
- Year 6 getting through their SATs, showing the kind of resilience and positive attitude that will serve them well through life. The rewards visit to Castlemania was good too!
- The Arvon writers' reunion meeting. Sixteen talented students and two talented members of staff read poems, plays and excerpts from novels in front of an audience. Nerve wracking for them, but a phenomenal experience for the audience – we've got some very accomplished young writers in our midst.
- Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and awards evening – including our first gold award winners.
- Educational visits to destinations near and far including London, Poland, Lumb Bank, Cragside, Newcastle University, Woodhorn Colliery and Kirkley Hall.
- Year 7 reward day, featuring a picnic, ice creams and a water fight.
- Year 11 leavers' prom – always a highlight, and always special. Planned by our staff, held in the beautifully decorated and unrecognisable hall and delivered with the kind of attention to detail that no 5-star hotel could match. A genuinely joyful and emotional evening.
- Year 5 Viking Day – helmets with horns on? Really? Year 5 learned all about that and more when two Vikings visited for the day.

## Uniform

We understand that you are reluctant to buy new items of uniform late in the summer term and we have been more tolerant of clothing that does not exactly match our clear policy. In September we will expect full compliance with the policy, so please read the following carefully **before** you go shopping near the end of the 6 weeks holiday, because anything other than full uniform will not be accepted.

- Blazers with the school logo embroidered
- Grey V-neck sweater with the school logo embroidered
- White shirt
- Black school shorts, knee length skirt or standard fit school trousers [not fashion items, jeans or leggings; no logos or embellishments]
- Shoes should be plain black throughout, without visible logo and be polishable

If you would like further clarification on the above, or would like to know where the uniform can be purchased, please visit our website or contact us directly.

## Holidays during term time

I know that the cost of holidays is cheaper during term time and it's therefore understandable that it's tempting to take your children out of school, missing vital days of education. Unfortunately, the repercussions of doing so can be harmful to their progress and this makes it more difficult for them to achieve well at school and can restrict their choices in later life.

Additionally, we follow the government guidelines and fine all parents who choose to take this route, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, if holidays are taken and the result is that overall attendance is poor, we will follow this up with legal action supported by the local authority.

Whilst it might seem that one or two students missing a few days is neither here nor there, the cumulative effect on the school is staggering. In the current academic year:

- **810** days of learning have been lost - a total of over 4 school years!
- We have had **142** requests for holidays during term time – that's a request from almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the students in Years 5-11
- If there were no holidays taken during term time, our whole school attendance would be above the national average

The research linking good attendance and high academic performance is compelling. Please give us every opportunity to support your child in reaching their full potential by ensuring they are in school, and on time, every day.

## Site organisation

Two years ago, due to increased numbers of students in Years 5 to 8, we didn't have enough classrooms to teach all of the classes on the middle school site and ended up having to use the main hall as a classroom. Last year, to combat this, we moved Year 8 to the upper school site and this has worked very well.

Given that Year 5 and Year 6 are now taught almost exclusively in form classes by primary staff, the vast majority of Year 7 lessons are delivered by teachers who travel from the upper school to teach them and then travel straight back to the other site at the end of the lesson. This doesn't help the staff and students to form strong, positive relationships, limits the

number of staff on site during breaks and lunchtimes and puts a huge strain on the timetable.

Given our experience this year, we feel that having Year 7 at the upper school would be extremely beneficial for them both academically and pastorally and I have taken the decision to do this from September.

At the upper school site Year 7 will have:

- a consistent tutor team
- their subject teachers on the same site as them throughout the week
- a Pastoral Support Officer who they are already very familiar with, Miss Hills, shared between Years 7 and 8
- direct access to better DT, engineering, science and sports facilities
- a specific area of the building that is exclusively for Year 7 and Year 8 to access during breaks and lunchtimes, including toilet facilities that are exclusively theirs. They do not have to stay in this area – they have access to the rest of the site, but this space is there should they choose to use it. We would anticipate that this will be popular at first and then become less busy as students gain more confidence to explore more of the social areas.

My preferred vision for the future is to have all of the students in a new building on the Acklington Road site – that's something we're working closely with Northumberland County Council to achieve. Until that becomes a reality, this is a temporary arrangement to make the best use of the sites we have, for the benefit of our students.

## **New build**

Talking of our vision for the future, it's an exciting time for us, and for the community of Amble in general, as we begin to plan for a significant investment in JCSC. We've spoken to our staff, members of the community and our students to come up with some ideas about what our new school will look like and there are some exciting ideas.

We are working with our partner schools and members of the local authority to decide together what the best education and community provision we can provide for the area will look like. Rest assured, we all want the very best facilities for your children, and for you, and I'll keep you updated as things gather momentum early next term.

## **Staffing**

Inevitably at this time of year, we have some changes in our staffing as valued colleagues move to new opportunities elsewhere and others, having contributed massively to the community, begin a well-deserved retirement.

Mr Anderson entered the teaching profession as a graduate of the Teach First scheme and is leaving us to work with them to ensure that the next cohort of people through Teach First are as successful and effective in teaching as he is.

Mr Angell-Moir has been with us for just one year, but his impact on students and families he has worked with has been significant. He is joining a school much nearer his home where I am certain he will be hugely successful.

Miss Boe is moving on from our primary team as she swaps Amble for Southampton and relocates to the south coast.

Miss Clegg will be very well known to Year 7 students, and less well known to other year groups. She has taught maths to Year 7 exclusively and I am sure they will join me in wishing her all the best for the future.

Mrs Gilbert will be well known to many people in school and out, as she has worked hard to create bonds between the community and school and has been a point of call for several families who are in challenging circumstances. Her approach to safeguarding and the wellbeing of students was praised by Ofsted and she leaves the school in a much better position than it was when she joined.

Mrs Green is not in school this week, as she is in Peru representing Great Britain at the World Surf Kayak Championships and defending her world title. Last week was her final week with us after over 12 years, as she leaves to relocate to Aberdeen. Our loss is Scotland's gain.

Mr Logan has worked in one of our most successful subject areas, engineering, for nine years and has, throughout that time, commuted over 60 miles per day from his home south of the Tyne. He leaves us to take up a similar teaching position in his hometown school, with his weekly travelling time cut from 10 hours to around 10 minutes!

Mrs Mason-Donoghue is leaving her role as cover supervisor to work with adults in an education environment.

Mrs Old is retiring this summer, having taught at JCSC for sixteen years. She's more than a teacher – she's a legend within the community, loved and respected by students past and present. Her impact on science teaching across our school is richer because of her dedication and our continued success in science subjects at GCSE and A-level owes a lot of thanks to her setting solid foundations in Key Stages 2 and 3. She's irreplaceable.

Following several years of dedicated service to JCSC, Miss Pearson has decided to seek a new challenge and leaves us at the end of this term with our sincere thanks and best wishes for her future endeavours.

Dr Reid has had a lasting impact on the way teacher training is delivered in school and has worked diligently ensuring our school leaders are well trained, working with the vast majority of them whilst following nationally recognised leadership qualifications.

Also leaving the primary team is Mrs Stuart, whose one year with us has seen her successfully pass her NQT year and acted as a good grounding for a successful career.

I'm not sure how Mr Thirlwell will cope without me. He and I have worked together in four schools since he qualified as a science teacher and, like Mr Logan, he leaves us to join a school much nearer to home. I'll give him two years and we'll be working together again!

We thank them all for the contribution they have made to James Calvert Spence College and wish them the very best of luck for the future, wherever that takes them.

For Mrs Brown, it's not "goodbye" but simply "au revoir" as she takes a year out to travel the world. I have no doubt that she will delight in the opportunity to let us know where she is at every possible opportunity and to share her adventures with us. She will return for

September 2020 with lots of fresh ideas that I am sure will manifest themselves inside and outside of the classroom.

This means that we are fortunate enough to welcome some new faces, eager to meet you and your children and to assist us in ensuring we provide the very best possible education for them.

- Mr McCudden joins us as Assistant Headteacher and he will lead a restructured team on all pastoral issues;
- Mrs Nicholson joins us as Primary Improvement Lead to ensure standards in Years 5 and 6 continue to improve;
- Ms Daniels joins us as Director of maths;
- Miss Armstrong joins our Year 6 team on a permanent basis;
- Mr Bailey and Mr Heeney join our Year 5 team;
- Mr Davison, Mrs Duggan and Dr Southworth join the science department;
- Miss Sheldon joins us for one year to teach art in Mrs Brown's absence;
- Mrs Smith joins the engineering department;
- Ms Cassidy, Mrs Stewart and Ms Young join the team as Pastoral Support Officers.

Miss Avison and Mrs Yuill will lead the Art & Design directorate in Mrs Brown's absence.

As touched upon earlier, the pastoral team has been restructured so that students and parents have more access to an identified member of staff who should be their first port of call if there are any issues arising or any information that needs to be shared with school:

- Mrs Stewart will be based at the lower school site at South Avenue and oversee Years 5 and 6;
- Miss Hills will move to the upper school site at Acklington Road and oversee Years 7 and 8;
- Ms Young will be based at the upper school site at Acklington Road and oversee Years 9 and 10;
- Ms Cassidy will be based at the upper school site at Acklington Road and oversee Years 11, 12 and 13.

I am sure you will join us in congratulating our exiting colleagues who are taking on a new challenge and warmly welcoming our new staff.

There has been a lot of information in this letter. If you would like any further clarification, or wish to speak to someone about any aspect of school life, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your continued support. We do hope that you have a safe, relaxing and enjoyable summer break and we look forward to your child/children returning to us on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September**, (we have **2** staff training days at the start of term), when we will continue to strive for excellence for all of our students.

Best wishes



NEIL RODGERS  
Executive Headteacher

***Some key dates for the summer and the start of the 2019/20 academic year:***

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| <b><i>Thursday August 15<sup>th</sup></i></b>    | - | <b><i>A-Level results day<br/>available from 8.00am</i></b>             |
| <b><i>Thursday August 22<sup>nd</sup></i></b>    | - | <b><i>GCSE results day<br/>available from 10.00am</i></b>               |
| <b><i>Monday September 2<sup>nd</sup></i></b>    | - | <b><i>Staff Training Day/<br/>6<sup>th</sup> Form Enrolment Day</i></b> |
| <b><i>Tuesday September 3<sup>rd</sup></i></b>   | - | <b><i>Staff Training Day/<br/>6<sup>th</sup> Form Enrolment Day</i></b> |
| <b><i>Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup></i></b> | - | <b><i>Students return to school</i></b>                                 |
| <b><i>Friday October 25<sup>th</sup></i></b>     | - | <b><i>End of first half term</i></b>                                    |
| <b><i>Monday November 4<sup>th</sup></i></b>     | - | <b><i>Staff Training Day</i></b>  |
| <b><i>Tuesday November 5<sup>th</sup></i></b>    | - | <b><i>Students return to school</i></b>                                 |