



April 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian

Following our last Ofsted inspection, I would like to keep you updated on the developments that are now underway in the school. Some of these are new and some were already in place through our own self-evaluation prior to the Ofsted report. We have identified priority areas and worked with the Local Authority and several high performing local schools to ensure that any changes we do make have a positive impact. Some changes will take longer to implement than others and some you will notice have already taken place. It is important that we have a disciplined approach to ensure new strategies have the desired impact as the natural reaction in these circumstances can be to make rapid changes without the necessary planning.

These changes will of course take time to come to fruition in terms of results later in the year and your continued support is also important here in ensuring students are positive, attend school, complete home learning on time and go to after school workshops and study sessions when required.

We have a full and comprehensive Action Plan and we have made some significant changes since the Ofsted inspection in November. We have now had a full Pupil Premium review and are acting on its recommendations and we are currently undertaking a review of Governance. Both of these reviews have been undertaken by people external to the school. The Governors are drawing up their action plan and acting upon the recommendations of the review. The role of a school Governor is an increasingly important yet complex one. There are actually vacancies on the Governing Body and we will be writing to all parents soon regarding how to apply. Please give this some serious concern and feel free to contact me or the Chair of Governors if you think you may be able to contribute to our school in this way.

There have already been a number of changes in the Maths Department, including the appointment of a new Curriculum Leader, Amanda Tunmore, who will start in June. Amanda is currently working for Northern Education Trust and prior to that was a very successful Curriculum Leaders for Maths at Churchill Community College. We have a detailed action plan in place for Maths and since the Ofsted inspection we have implemented a change in the management structure of Maths, undertaken a full review of the department with support from the Local Authority and other schools, and have introduced new schemes of work across the school and more personalised home learning. This is building on developments lower down the school that we introduced last year.

We have also already implemented and are seeing the benefits of an improved attendance strategy and I know that Mrs Anderson has written to you on several occasions about this. Your support as parents is clearly key to success in this area. We regularly stress the importance of attendance and without your child in school any strategies we develop around teaching and learning will clearly not have the impact.

Our staff are also working, as recommended by Ofsted, to introduce even more challenge into lessons where it was felt not be as high as others and we are continue to ensure that we all have the highest expectations for our young people. The vast majority of our young people do achieve well here but we believe that this increase in challenge in lessons will help them even more. Our departments are continuously reviewing the challenge in their curriculum through a curriculum mapping exercise to ensure that any necessary changes are swift in light of changes to examinations in Key Stage 4 and the increased demand at a primary school level. We have changed our Home Learning policy and returned to more regular home learning for all year groups. Recent staff training sessions (which we continue to have every Tuesday) have focussed on questioning skills, differentiation and literacy and numeracy. We have also increased the rigour of our own monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. This has involved support from the Local Authority and other schools and has involved us reviewing and adapting our approach to lesson observations, work scrutiny, student voice and departmental self-evaluation and curriculum area reviews.

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Our Year 11 and Year 13 students in particular are working very hard at the moment in the run up to their exams. There were a large number of them in school over the Easter holidays attending revision classes and the recent mock exam results for Year 11, particularly in Maths, were very pleasing. We wish them all the very best in the forthcoming exams.

There are many other things going on in school but I hope that gives you a flavour of the changes we are implementing. We continue to be completely focused on meeting the higher expectations of the new Ofsted framework, but, more importantly, on ensuring that all of our students achieve the very best possible results in all their subjects.

I would like to thank you for your support for the school and for your attendance at events and parents evenings. We have had most of our parent evenings now this year and there has been an excellent attendance at all of them. Our most recent Parents Evening last week for Year 8 was a record for us with 86% of parents making appointments to attend. We are delighted that so many parents are supportive of our school and we are also very pleased to announce that we are oversubscribed again for next year and we will welcome 228 new students into Year 7 in September.

Uniform and dress code requirements 2018-19

As you are aware we spent some considerable time in September focussing on uniform expectations which had been made clear to students and parents prior to the start of the year. Unfortunately, despite our efforts to make our expectations clear to students and parents, significant numbers of students came to school in September not wearing acceptable uniform. Many students spent time in isolation as a result and the situation was challenging and stressful for everyone – students, parents and staff. We have continued to work hard as a school to make our expectations clear, and whilst there have been improvements, as we enter the final term of the year there are still problems and inconsistencies. Not only does this create a negative impression of the school to students, staff, visitors and the local community, it also makes it more difficult for parents to consistently support the school's uniform requirements.

I am sure you would agree that we should be spending our time in school working with your child to maximise their achievement and progress rather than spending hours every week dealing with uniform issues. This is something that I would like to draw your attention to, and ask for your support with in advance of the summer holidays when many of you will be organising new uniform for your child. To avoid any confusion about what is acceptable and to make it easier for all students, staff and parents to concentrate on learning, from September we will be asking parents to purchase **trousers** and **skirts** from **Emblematic only**. They will be bespoke for our school and will be branded with the school badge. This will apply to all year groups. We will provide you with further details as soon as possible. In addition we will be providing you with clearer guidance on what is acceptable school footwear (Emblematic also have a link to acceptable shoes on their website).

We believe our school has a really positive ethos, with very strong pastoral and academic guidance and a real emphasis on learning in everything we do. We do have very high expectations of and aspirations for all of our young people and we expect them to have the highest expectations of themselves. This clearly covers all aspects of school life including their attitude, attendance and behaviour as well as their uniform and appearance. We place great importance on working in partnership with parents and I would like to thank you in advance for your ongoing support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

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