

Headteacher: Mr D. Whales | Chair of Governors: Mr A. Brown

17th April 2024

Dear Parents and Careers

I wanted to write to you at the start of term with an 'update newsletter' which shares the areas that we are working to further develop at the school.

Before you read on, I need to highlight a very important update about the summer term dates. We have realised there is an error with the published end-of-term date for this year, July 2024. We actually finish on Wednesday 17th NOT Friday 19th July.

The Summer term is an extremely busy and important term. For the year groups approaching their final exams, it's an opportunity for them to put all their hard work into practice. This comes with obvious pressure, we as a school have all been working extremely hard to get students in a position to show what they can do.

The summer Exam Season officially begins on Friday 10th May and the last possible date for exams (including possible contingency exams) is 26th June.

This year we have increased our expectations for Year 11. This expectation means additional study requirements, excellent behaviour, and high attendance. For those that have really embraced this, they will see a price reduction in the Prom tickets and most importantly greater success in their exam outcomes. For those whose behaviour and attitudes have fallen below the minimum expectations, they have received letters explaining they are likely to lose their places at the graduation and prom.

For Year 10, the expectations have already risen and at the point the current Year 11 leave, they will begin their Year 11. The increased study expectations including lesson 6 will begin during the second half of the summer term. We will also be looking closely at the outcomes from their recent exams, and we will be using these to ensure all students are focused on the year ahead.

Ongoing School Improvement

Over the past 12 months, the school has experienced rapid improvement in all areas. We are incredibly proud of what has happened at KSA. We are also clear that there is still work to be done to make the school an Outstanding school.

We have put a lot of emphasis on excellent behaviour and attitudes during the Autumn and Spring Terms; this will continue, and during this term will rise further still. We have seen a rise in positive behaviour points (over a third increase in each year group), attendance is improving across the school and staff are reporting lessons are free from low-level disruption.

Nationally, and locally, schools are reporting behaviour as a major concern. We still face some challenges, but being able to buck this trend and report an improving picture at KSA is a great position to be in. Roll Call has transformed students' readiness to learn, now we are turning our attention to higher learning expectations in lessons.

In a recent staff survey we asked what the staff felt was working well and what needed further work. Very simply staff felt that behaviour and the culture was excellent. The area that needed the biggest change was student apathy. Basically, the conditions for learning are there, now the students need to step up! This will be a big focus for us moving forward.

Standards and expectations

When we talk about these things, we mean making sure the very basics are in place to enable learning.

- Attendance, there is endless evidence that one of the biggest determinants of school success is attending school regularly. Low attendance rates are responsible for over a grade difference at the end of year 11.
- Punctuality – attending school on time. The gates open at 8.30 am and students should be in school by 8.40 am. We are also focused on prompt starts to lessons. To state the obvious if students aren't in lessons they aren't learning and are disadvantaging themselves.
- Uniform – the standard of uniforms has greatly improved. Trainers are no longer a problem. Ties and shirts are consistent. Blazers are an area that we will tighten this term – the expectation is that blazers will be worn at all times (apart from the back playground during break times). There is a bizarre culture creeping in of students carrying their blazers around with them. Blazers are designed and purchased to be worn – we expect them to be worn. Skirts have been an area of relative failure and significant irritation – the Lycra style skirts remain, please do not buy these! From September there will be a single style of skirt accepted.
- Mobile phones – there has been so much noise in the press about the dangers and harm smartphones are presenting to our children. We are tightening our expectations, phones will be expected to be turned off and placed in bag, if they are seen (even in pockets) they will be confiscated.
- Toilets – there is time between lessons to go to the toilet. I have asked staff to limit students leaving classes to go to the toilet. There are of course genuine times when students may need to go, but so often this is not the case. This is a challenge for schools, but we are clear that students need to be in lessons to learn. We have also increased supervision of toilets at break times.
- Vaping – alongside mobiles, this is one of the areas that is causing significant concerns in schools. We have zero tolerance for vapes – if they are brought into school students will be in IEU for 3 days and if there is a next time, they will be suspended.

Areas that need improving

There are areas we feel we still need to develop, and we are working hard to improve:

- Homework – a part of improving academic success needs to create a culture of student study beyond the classroom. This is not yet where it needs to be.
- Assessment is being developed, and there is a very clear structure that staff are building their curriculum around. Each year group will have an annual set of exams with smaller unit-type testing throughout the year.

- Reading is a fundamental which we have to get right. The supporting research clearly demonstrates the stronger the reader, the better they do in their exams and life! We, collectively, need to get children reading as often as possible.
- Skirts – from September the only skirt that will be permitted will be pleated skirts with a minimum length of 22 inches and be knee length. These can be purchased now, if you choose, from Chroma Sports (or any other provider, they are not branded).

Come and visit?

I am very keen to invite the community into the school so that you can see the quality of the provision. This term there will be a series of Open Mornings. I will be personally showing around anybody who wants to come and visit. We will see Roll Call, Lessons and anywhere else people would like to visit. The visits are not pre-planned I am keen that we are able to show what the school looks like on a daily basis.

There will be four available dates in the Summer Term:

1. Wednesday 15th May, 8.20 am to 9.30 am
2. Friday 24th May, 9.30 am to 10.30 am
3. Tuesday 4th June, 8.20 am to 9.30 am
4. Thursday 6th June, 11.30 am to 12.30 pm

<https://forms.office.com/e/ESNgbxDcZp>

So much of what I have listed above requires reinforcement and support from home. If we can get all students in school every day, on time, with the correct uniform and equipment we are a long way into making each day a success. Ideally with a positive attitude (as often as possible, I am also a parent!).

If you have made it this far, then thank you! I hope this gives you a sense of what we are achieving at the school. There is a huge drive and passion to make KSA the kindest, safest and the best school in Peterborough. This will be achieved through positive partnerships between the school, you the parents, and your children.



Mr D Whales
Headteacher