

December 2021

## Headlines

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would like to start by saying a huge thank you to everyone who has donated a present for the Swindon toy appeal. Your generosity and compassion are amazing, particularly at a time when many people are struggling financially. The toys have been delivered to Gateway church and are sure to bring hope and happiness to many children and their parents this Christmas.

### Events of the term

It was fantastic to attend the Instrumental Showcase on 30<sup>th</sup> November this year and to hear 'live' music again in school. It was a wonderful platform for musicians, from beginners to more accomplished, to gain confidence in performing. All gave polished performances, the result of hours and hours of practise, and it was a delight to watch. Thanks must go to Mrs Matthews, our fantastic Head of Music who has dedicated her time to rehearsing and preparing the students for such great performances. We are delighted that in the past year we have been awarded the prestigious Music Mark, which recognises schools which demonstrate a high level of commitment to Music. Long may it continue.

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December we are holding our popular Christmas showcase which unfortunately, has already sold out due to the need to limit numbers for everyone's safety. We were planning to live stream the event however, we are unable to guarantee that all performers have the necessary consents in time for this to happen and we do not want to prevent anyone from taking part. We are therefore going to record the event instead as we will be able to regulate who receives a copy, ensuring that those who do not consent to being filmed are not shown. We do apologise if you were unable to secure a ticket and understand that it is very disappointing.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> we held our annual GCSE presentation evening where we presented certificates to our former Year 11 students. It was lovely to catch up with everyone again to celebrate their successes. We were also delighted to have Jamil Qureshi as our guest speaker, who was himself a student at Dorcan. Jamil is a psychologist and performance coach who has worked with top level sportsmen and women around the world and now travels all over the world giving presentations. It was truly inspiring hearing about his journey and how to adopt a Growth Mindset.

This week we have been holding our House Christmas dinners and we are grateful to our fantastic catering team who have prepared around 750 Christmas meals over the course of the week as well as catering for the rest of the school who were having their lunches as usual. It was a fantastic family atmosphere of belonging as students sat with their tutors and other staff from their House, made conversation, ate lots of lovely food, pulled their Christmas crackers and generally had a great time joining in the festive fun.

### Academic procedures

At Dorcan, all lessons have aspects that are common to all subjects. It is our intention to keep you informed of these so that you can have a greater understanding what we are trying to achieve as a school and can support your child to understand the process of learning. One of these procedures is our 'Do Now' which starts every lesson. The purpose of the Do Now is to check what students know and can remember from previous learning, and for the teacher to address any misconceptions or

misunderstandings that may have arisen. It may also be used for students to write their opinions or current knowledge of a new topic or new learning linked to the lesson

The 'Do Now' will often take the form of a 'low stakes' quiz made up of quick questions to check understanding. Teachers will also take this opportunity to close gaps for students that may have been absent in a previous lesson. By having a 'Do Now' at the start of every lesson, the intention is for students to know and be able to remember more over time and therefore to progress more quickly in their learning.

### **Our character programme**

This academic year we launched our new character programme. Along with our school values of Be Kind, Show Respect, Do your Best, we agreed on 9 character virtues which we are actively teaching our students: Honesty, Integrity, Compassion, Courage, Gratitude, Generosity, Personal Responsibility, Resilience and Self-Discipline. We do this through our assemblies and tutor programme as well as through specific taught actions, such as showing appreciation: for example, by saying thank you and holding the doors open for others.

We are currently working on the virtue of Personal Responsibility, learning that all our actions have consequences, and it is the way we act and react to them that matters. When we make mistakes or let ourselves down or fall short of the expected standards, it is all too easy to make excuses or to blame others. We want our students to learn that these things do happen and are part of life, but that we need to take personal responsibility for them. So, if they are late to school or to lessons, or forget to bring their equipment, they need to accept that they will be issued with a detention and serve the sanction with the right attitude. If they disrupt learning in class and are requested to leave, they need to take responsibility for their own actions, and accept the sanction without arguing or blaming others.

With Home Learning, we are again trying to teach the students to work independently and to take some responsibility for their own progress. It is their personal responsibility to seek help if they need it – homework club is on every night and there have been independent study sessions put on for students needing extra support. It is their responsibility to meet the deadline and any request for help needs to have been made prior to this – our staff are always willing to help anyone who seeks it. It is not acceptable to make excuses on the day it is due in and this will be met with a sanction.

We would like your help with this, as where parents reinforce the same messages at home, (even when you think we've got it wrong or you disagree) students learn to make the right choices, and this leads to them not only achieving the outcomes they are capable of and deserve, but also becoming the kind of students that we would all be proud of. We are strongest when we stick together, and it is really appreciated when parents support what we are trying to achieve.

### **Last day arrangements – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 12 noon**

The last day of this term is Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December and we will be finishing at 12 noon to allow you to begin your Christmas celebrations and for us to say goodbye to colleagues who are leaving us. Students may, if they wish, bring a charitable donation of £1 and wear non-school uniform. It would be great if they could embrace the Christmas spirit by wearing a Christmas jumper. Although this is a non-school uniform day, please make sure your child is sensible in their choice of clothing and jewellery.

The timings will be as follows:

- 8:30 – Tutor time
- 8:50 – Lesson 1
- 9:40 – Christmas pub quiz in tutor groups
- 11:10 – Break (Lunch may be purchased, along with free school meals)
- 11:40 – Back to tutor for final goodbyes and packing away
- 12:00 – Finish

### **Staff leaving**

Sadly, we will be saying goodbye to a few members of staff this Christmas: Mrs Bunter who has been a fantastic Science teacher and form tutor; Mr Weedon, who taught Creative i-Media and Digital Skills; Mr Brown who joined us in September 2021 as Head of Maths and lastly, Mr Chapple who has worked at Dorcan for many years and is leaving to take up a new, exciting career opportunity. Mr Chapple has worked with some of our most vulnerable students and has exuded care and compassion whilst always being ambitious for students, ensuring that they achieved their very best. We are very sorry to be saying goodbye to these colleagues but wish them every success for the future.

We are delighted to be welcoming back Miss McMahon, our former Head of Maths who is moving back into the area. Miss McMahon was responsible for transforming the Maths department and improving results significantly; she will be taking over again as Head of Maths but will also be joining our senior leadership team to take up an exciting professional development opportunity. Mr Smithers is a highly experienced teacher and leader who is joining us as our new Head of Creative i-Media and Digital Skills and, we are in the process of advertising for a replacement for Mr Chapple. In the interim, Mr Rekowski, one of our Pastoral Support Officers will undertake this role. We are also delighted to have appointed two new Teaching assistants who will start in January – Rachel Turner and Carmen Parker and a highly experienced Design Technology technician, Nick Fitton.

### **Rewards**

Currently the House totals are:

- Kingfisher: 30,781
- Osprey: 30,632
- Eagle: 30,092
- Falcon: 24,900

Don't forget to keep earning those house points.

### **Testing on return**

We are being asked to test all students again after the Christmas break prior to students starting school. We are planning to do this during our two INSET days on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January so that no learning time is lost – you will receive separate details of the time that your child's tutor group is being tested. It may be necessary to do some testing on the Thursday depending on numbers. We would encourage as many of you as possible to take this up so that we can keep everyone safe.

Finally, please ensure that your child does not do anything over the holidays which is against our uniform policy and cannot be rectified in time for the start of term. We do not wish to isolate any students on return but will adhere to our high standards. Please see the website for information if you are unsure about what is acceptable. In particular, we do not allow piercings apart from one ear-ring worn in the ear lobe, hair colours have to be natural and one colour, and we do not allow alternative or extreme hairstyles, tramlines or haircuts shorter than a no. 2. We do not allow false nails or nail varnish. We will expect all students in proper shoes, no trainers. Thank you for your support in ensuring that we continue to be the smartest school in Swindon!

Please be reminded that Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> January is a Bank holiday and Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January are INSET days, though some Year 11 students may be invited in for exam preparation or coursework completion. We wish you a relaxing and safe holiday and look forward to seeing everyone again on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Sherryl Bareham  
Headteacher

