

February 2022

Headlines

Dear Parent/Carer

Good News

We are delighted to announce that this year The Dorcan Academy is oversubscribed for places in Year 7 with the vast majority being first choice places. Our numbers have increased steadily over the past few years and this is testament to the tireless hard work of staff and students in 'aspiring to greatness'. This significant increase in numbers shows that we are becoming a school of first choice for local children.

Sporting success

The Year 9/10 Basketball team concluded their season with a courageous defeat against a very strong Highworth Warneford team in the semi-final of the District Cup. Most of the team had not played a competitive game or represented the school before this season, but exemplified the Dorcan character virtues of resilience, courage, personal responsibility and integrity. It has been a pleasure to see their skill levels and teamwork improve in each match. Well done to the whole squad.

The football season has got off to a great start for all year groups this week, with matches against Lawn Manor. There were wins for all year groups, but also a great show of integrity, compassion and resilience with the way games were played.

We would like to congratulate Jack Choules who represented Swindon at the South-West Cross-Country Championships. It is a great achievement to be selected to run for Swindon and we are very proud of him.

Highly Able success

Our students came an honourable second in the Year 9 Schools Challenge day! We were narrowly beaten by Highworth Warneford (again) however, came ahead of St. Joe's and Lydiard Park!! Next time, we will take the trophy!

Performing Arts success

The Year 9 and 10 Dorcan Dancers 'had a blast' in their workshop on Thursday with Claire and Faith from Swindon Dance. The Dorcan Dancers did us all proud and the dance teachers complimented us on our amazing students' conduct and behaviour.

Raising aspirations

We are delighted that so many of our students, aged 13+ are completing Eton College's online employability courses. We are offering Job interview skills, Resilience, Entrepreneurship and Research skills. This is a great opportunity for self-improvement in our aspirational students and we would like to encourage as many students as possible to complete one or more of these courses. The benefits are learning new and relevant skills and getting an impressive certificate on completion, to add to their future CV. E-mail Mrs Abbott: jabbott@dorcan.co.uk if you are interested in finding out more.

Charity week - Compassion

This week is Charity week and all of the Houses have been raising money which will be split across the four House charities. One of the highlights has been the Staff v Student dodgeball competition which was great fun and a great success. Mr Skelton's 8OSI team remarkably beat the staff team!!

Mrs Burnett would like to say a particular thanks to Kingfisher House parents who bought and sold raffle tickets and contributed to the hampers for their charity 'Heart Heroes'. The hampers looked incredible and the raffle was drawn on Friday 11th February. By the time you are reading this, winners should have been notified and asked to collect their goodies before the end of term. A whopping £463 was raised for the charity. Hot off the press, Osprey House have announced that they have raised £331.62 for their charity. Further details of House totals raised will be published in the next Headlines.

Community service

On Thursday afternoon, the Dorcan Community Action Group held their first litter pick along the pathways that surround the school. A total of 9 students, accompanied by 3 members of staff, worked together to fill 4 bins, leaving the area in a much cleaner state. The Group was really pleased with the result of their effort and are already talking about repeating the event next term.

World Book Day

On 4th March, we will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of World Book Day. In the run up to the big day, we will be holding exciting events all week during breaktimes, lunchtimes and during library lessons. We will be solving a murder-mystery in the library, competing to win Dorcan's Masked Reader quiz and celebrating the fantastic progress of some of our most dedicated readers at an amazing Harry Potter themed afternoon tea. Please encourage your children to take part and support them to foster a love of reading. It's such an important skill that they will need throughout their life, from job interviews to reading bedtime stories to their own children.

Not only does reading greatly improve your child's chances of gaining further education and work but it also has a positive impact on their mental health and well-being by enabling them to relax away from a screen and increasing their vocabulary, meaning they can express their worries in more detail and receive the most appropriate support. On this note, the English department and Literacy team would really appreciate encouragement from parents with independent reading. We are able to provide the opportunity for our students to read for at least an hour a week in-school and would love it for this to be matched at home.

Miss Keller, our Literacy coordinator, is aiming to run some parent workshops focused on supporting our students with their independent reading. Look out for an upcoming Parentmail with more information about how you can support your child with reading at home, choosing the right books and encouraging a love of reading. There will also be a link to register your interest for the parent workshops.

Clubs and extra-curricular activities

We are delighted that 92% of our Year 7 students are attending at least one extra-curricular club either in or outside of school with 87% attending one of our clubs at Dorcan. We know from our data, that those who commit themselves to clubs do better academically and therefore we would strongly

recommend that **all students** join at least one club. There is something for everyone. Please see the website for this term's clubs.

Academic procedures

We are currently working on 'Engineering efficiency' in our lessons and tutor times. This involves ensuring that students arrive and are ready to start their learning (i.e. coats off and all equipment out) within 3 minutes of the lesson changeover. In preparing our students for the workplace we need them to understand the importance of being punctual, and therefore students that are late receive an after-school detention. We appreciate your support as we teach this important expectation.

English texts

Students in Year 10 need to buy their copies of Romeo and Juliet from main reception ready for next term. They cost £2.85. If the student has an older sibling who had a copy, they can use theirs. Any student who is entitled to Free School Meals will be issued with a free copy at their request.

Catering

Unfortunately, due to increased costs our caterers are putting up their prices from April. To soften the blow of the additional cost to parents we propose to subsidise half the cost of the increase to make it more manageable for parents this year. New pricing will be published on our website in the next few weeks when we announce our new menu for all students. Our caterers, Aspens, continually look for ways to improve both quality and service and students have recently praised the quality of the food on offer.

Police presence

Our Community police officers have requested that they spend more time in school with a view to building positive relationships with our students and the local community. This is not related to, or as a result of, any specific issues or concerns, therefore please do not be alarmed if you see them or their car around the school – they simply wish to become well-known faces in order to build trust within the community and we are happy to welcome them.

Uniform

As we approach half term we would remind parents again to ensure that your child does not do anything over the break which will breach our uniform regulations on return. We have noticed over the past few weeks that trainers have been creeping in; these are not allowed and anyone wearing them without a medical note will be required to work in isolation if they have not been rectified for after the holiday. If your child does have a medical note, we would ask that you try to ensure that their trainers are all black. Often trainers are advertised as 'school shoes' in shops, however, at Dorcan we require students to wear proper all black leather-like shoes. If the 'shoe' has a Nike or Adidas (or indeed any other logo) embedded into it then the likelihood is that it is a trainer.

Trousers should be **full length** and **tailored**, not skinny or figure hugging. The school skirts need to be knee length and a longer length can be purchased if students are particularly tall. As for socks, we have made the decision to allow **all** students to wear either white, dark-grey or black socks. These need to cover the ankle.

Our uniform rules also state that hairstyles need to be traditional and should not be shorter than a no. 2. Again, recently some students have had styles which have been cut shorter than this and in more extreme examples, shaved. This includes having it long on top and shaved at the sides or neck. It is not easy to rectify a hairstyle and therefore, students will need to be prepared to spend time in isolation if they choose to go against the rules.

We believe that high standards of uniform are important; we have made our expectations very clear on the website and given ample time for issues to be sorted; therefore, students need to take personal responsibility for the consequences if they do not adhere to them. Thank you for your support.

Covid update

As you will be aware, it is no longer a requirement for students or staff to wear face masks in communal areas or in classrooms. Some students have chosen to continue wearing them and we have allowed them to make that choice for themselves. We have begun to start 'live' assemblies again as these are much more impactful for getting across our key messages. We would continue to encourage students to receive their vaccinations and, until all restrictions ease, to use their lateral flow tests if they display symptoms and stay at home if they test positive. There have been a number of students off with Covid however, fortunately, only one or two staff have been out at any one time which has meant that we have not had to resort to online lessons. We are delighted that our attendance has been above both the Swindon and the National average, so that is a fantastic achievement we can all be thankful for.

Rewards

Currently the House totals are:

- Eagle: 48,920
- Osprey: 46,946
- Kingfisher: 44,662
- Falcon: 40,786

Osprey have taken the lead from Kingfisher and Falcon have moved into 3rd place! Don't forget to keep earning those house points.

We wish you all a fun, restful and safe half term.

Yours sincerely



S. Bareham

Mrs Sherryl Bareham