

July 2023

Headlines

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are almost at the end of another academic year and the time has flown by! This term has seen a number of key events such as Sports day, Year 7 Camp, Year 10 Work experience, College taster days, Year 11 Leaver assembly and Prom, our Year 6 Transition events, the performances of Matilda, and the Rewards trip amongst other things. It has been incredibly busy but full of fun and excitement. We will be sending out the highlights of all these events in our Newsletter shortly.

Rewards trip 2023

It was lovely to be able to run our annual rewards trip to Brean Sands once again this year for Years 8 – 10. We had 4 coaches of fantastic students that had all met the criteria (as set out by our student council) and deserved a special treat. Well done to all students who were invited!

We are aware that there were some students eligible to attend who did not return their slips by the deadline date, however, having extended the deadline once we had to eventually have a final cut off point, as taking so many students out for the day involves risk assessments, registers being produced for each coach, free school meals to be allocated etc. There are lots of things to think about for the trip to be safe and successful. I appreciate that this is disappointing if your child was impacted, but being fully prepared to ensure we can run the trip safely has to be our priority.

The Year 7 rewards trip will take place at the start of Year 8 as we were unable to book sufficient coaches on the same day. We hope this will mean the park will be less crowded and it may prove to be a brilliant time to go and should create a fun start to the new academic year. We have booked the coaches for next year's trip already to ensure availability.

Academic Prep policy

In September we are going to be renaming Home Learning, Academic Prep (or Prep, for short!). This is to emphasise the fact that the work issued is purposefully designed to promote independent learning and **prepare** students for their exams and ultimately, their future. We strongly believe that if you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail! We are equipping our students to succeed and to 'Aspire to Greatness'. Academic Prep is focused on committing subject knowledge to long-term memory, where you can really say confidently that you have learnt it and can retrieve the information when needed. Doing this regularly will ensure that your child is well prepared to sit their GCSEs in year 11.

Last year we trialled not issuing sanctions for failure to complete Home Learning, which, for some of our hardworking self-motivated students, particularly in KS3 worked well. Unfortunately, many of our students, largely in KS4 interpreted this to mean that they didn't need to do it! This was never the case, we were just trying to promote students as independent scholars. Failure to complete Home Learning (Academic Prep) will result in your child being at a distinct disadvantage in their exams, as they will not have committed essential learning to their long-term memory. Therefore, this year it is necessary to re-introduce a sanction for failing to complete Academic Prep on time and to a good standard.

At KS3, students will be issued with a one-hour Prep detention where they fail to complete Academic Prep for the third time within a half term (for subjects that are only taught once a fortnight, this will be 3 times within a big term). Students will continue to be rewarded for completing on time and to a good standard, but the sanction is

there for students who repeatedly forget or fail to complete their Prep. Each new term we will reset to allow students to make the right choice again, thus developing them as independent scholars.

At KS4, students will be issued with a one-hour Prep detention **each time** they fail to complete a piece of Academic Prep. This is because it is vital that in the lead up to Year 11 exams, students consolidate and take personal responsibility for their learning if they are to achieve their very best. By this time students should be well aware of the benefits of completing Prep and should be capable of organising themselves to complete it on time. At the Prep detention, students will be required to complete their Prep, if they haven't already done so. Students need to learn that meeting deadlines is an important aspect of the workplace and that not to do so, has negative consequences. We trust that you will support us as we seek to equip our students for life at work and in the world. Students have been notified of these changes through assemblies and Tutor times.

Use of EPraise

In September we are going to be using a platform called 'EPraise' to set Academic Prep and it will also be used to log rewards, sanctions and achievements towards our Character award, amongst other things. Students will be able to download an app to their phones (for use outside of school) which will enable them to view all their rewards and sanctions instantly and you as parents will also be able to access this. We hope that this will improve communication between school and home.

Change to the behaviour policy in September

We are making some tweaks to our behaviour policy from September, which will become available on the academy website following the next Trustees meeting in the new academic year. A summary of the pertinent points are detailed below and you will be notified again when the new policy is published.

Currently, we set same day detentions for Lateness to school and Lateness to lessons with advanced notice detentions issued for Repeated lack of equipment and multiples of 3 warnings within a week. In September, we will also be issuing same day detentions for truancy from lessons; and advanced notice detentions for Failure to complete Academic Prep (Home Learning) on time or to a good standard.

Our mobile phone rule is 'See it, hear it, lose it' and parents are required to collect. If students refuse to hand over their mobile phone when requested to do so by the teacher, they will be sent to the reflection room where they will be required to hand over their mobile phone prior to entry as well as serve the Reflection and after school detention. Refusal to hand over at this point will lead to a suspension with the requirement to complete the day in reflection on return.

Free haircuts

We are aware of the cost of having your hair cut and have found that cuts seem to be getting shorter simply because they take longer to grow back! Last year we arranged for a professional barber/hairdresser to come to the school at the start of September on our INSET days to offer **FREE** haircuts. We are trying to arrange this again for this September, so please check our facebook page in August for further details. All haircuts must meet the academy regulations.

Pre-loved uniform donations

If you have any pre-loved uniform that can be redistributed to other students, please bring it into school. We would really appreciate it. This includes pre-loved PE kit – shorts, tracksuit bottoms, trainers, and football boots. The PE department like to have spares to loan out as required.

Water safety

Sir Robert Buckland (MP) has requested that we remind everyone, particularly over the holiday period, to take care around water in and around Swindon and be aware of the dangers. We want all our students to return to us on the first day in September safely.

Water claims the lives of more than 50 children a year in the UK. Drowning is among the leading causes of accidental death. Under-estimating the dangers of water can have tragic consequences. You may be able to swim well in a warm indoor pool, but that does not mean you will be able to swim in cold water. The key to staying safe is making the right choices to avoid getting into difficulty in the first place.

✂ Here are some top tips for staying safe around water:

✔ Take notice of safety information, warning signs and flags. Younger children may not recognise the dangers and need to be supervised by an adult.

✂ Do not jump or dive into rivers. Quick entry into cold water can cause your body to go into shock. Also, it's difficult to judge the depth just by looking, there can be submerged dangers such as weed or rubbish.

✔ Be aware of strong currents and don't go into water near locks, weirs, sluices, bridges, and pipes as these structures are often linked with strong currents.

✂ The water in rivers and lakes can be colder than you expect at any time of the year. Cold water shock will affect your ability to swim, look after yourself, or rescue others. It's a key reason why many people drown.

✔ Get trained in lifesaving and resuscitation techniques. Know what to do in an emergency.

(There are a number of organisations that deliver CPR training, ranging from charities and voluntary ambulance services to private companies. The following charities provide CPR training: British Heart Foundation, British Red Cross and Royal Life Saving Society UK)

✂ Airbeds, inner tubes and other flotation devices can easily be carried or blown into deep water and may not keep you afloat.

✂ Consuming alcohol will impair your ability and judgement in and around water.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/.../publicat.../staying-safe-around-water>

and <https://www.rlss.org.uk/summer-water-safety>

Attendance

It is important to remember that whilst 90% in a test would be fantastic, if a child's attendance is 90% that would mean that they would miss 100 lessons across one school year, if this level of absence continued, they could miss 500 hours of learning across their 5 years at Dorcan. This is going to have a significant impact on their progress and life chances.

With this in mind we will be continuing to focus on improving the attendance of students in September and will be having a "strong start" to attendance in the first two weeks of term. This will involve members of the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of House carrying out home visits for students who have unauthorised absences or who are absent and had poor attendance in the previous academic year. The aim of these home visits is to engage with students and families and support them back into school.

As part of this "strong start" we are also encouraging parents to contact the school over the summer if any issues arise that are going to prevent students from attending school regularly in September. We want to intervene as early as possible and the earlier we know about an issue the more we can do to help. Please contact Mr Child at tchild@dorcan.co.uk if you require any support.

In addition to the above, just a quick reminder that absences to school are reported via the Studybugs app. All you need to do is download the app and fill in the registration; this will then automatically link with the school. If you do not have a smartphone, you can also report absence online using a web browser, just search for Studybugs in any search engine. Please make sure that you are reporting any absences as soon as possible. If we don't hear from you, we will send you a text message; if there is no reply the absence will be recorded as

unauthorised. If a student has too many unauthorised absences across the school year they will be referred to the local authority who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

Year 7 first day reminder

Year 7 will need to arrive in their **PE kit** on their first day, **Tuesday 5th September** as they will be taking part in some House team building activities and the day is so action packed that there won't be time to change. We appreciate that you will want to see them looking pristine in their uniform on the first day, however, we want to make it fun and memorable and don't want them feeling restricted in their activities or arriving home on their first day with their lovely new uniform looking a mess! Please view **Wednesday 6th September** as the first day for the full school uniform and be prepared to take your photos (which you can then remind them of in Year 11!!) We will also take their individual photos in school on Thursday 7th September.

Year 7 will need to arrive at the main entrance at the front of the school on Tuesday where they will be directed to the basketball courts. However, on Wednesday they will use the student entrance, where they can enter and exit safely without going near the car park. Tutors will ensure that students know where to go before they end the day on Tuesday.

Student Leaders

As is customary, our student leaders will be required in school on the first **two days** of the year where we will have Year 7 only, to assist with the events and to receive training on various aspects of their role. Details will be sent separately by Mr Tanner.

Years 8 – 11 - Start of term arrangements

Although the first full day for all students will be Thursday 7th September, **Year 10 and 11** will be required in school on **Wednesday 6th September** for a **one-hour** Revision Strategies session to prepare for their examination courses and the year ahead. The **Year 10** session will be from **10am – 11am** and the Year 11 session from **1pm – 2pm**. At the end of the respective sessions students will make their way home. Students should arrive through the front entrance, 15 minutes before the start of the session, in full school uniform equipped with their pencil case, and make their way to the sports hall.

The first full day for Years 8 – 11 will be **Thursday 7th September**; students should arrive by **8:25am** in their **full school uniform**. Years 9 and 11 will have their individual photos taken on this day.

Staff leaving us

We are very sorry to be saying goodbye to eight members of staff at the end of this academic year; they are: Mrs Cox, who is retiring after 23 years of loyal service to The Dorcan Academy and even longer, to education – she is a fantastic English teacher and Pastoral senior leader full of wisdom and extensive knowledge of our students – she will be greatly missed; Ms Ackrill who is also retiring and has given years of service to our SEND department as well as being an outstanding teacher of Maths to small groups; Mr Agyei, our wonderful SENCO who has been a model of our Dorcan values and virtues and has the patience of a saint; Miss Bareham (not to be confused with Mrs Bareham!) who has done a sterling job supporting our students to catch up with their reading with great success; Miss Leyland, an amazing Science teacher who is moving to be closer to home and has secured a job at Cheltenham Ladies College no less; Mr Smithers (Media) who is also moving to a job closer to home, Ms Paulin, one of our Pastoral Support Officers and Mrs Mitchell, our SEN Admin assistant who are both moving on to pastures new. We are going to miss them all but wish them all the best in their new ventures and thank them for all they have contributed to our wonderful school. We are also going to be saying Goodbye to Ms McMahon for a while as she is going on maternity leave; Mrs Hodges, will return for a few weeks in September before also going on maternity leave. We wish them both all the best.

New staff and Staff changes for September

We are delighted to be welcoming some fantastic new staff to the academy in September. They are: Mr Kemp (our new Head of English), Mr Williams, (Head of Maths and AHT Raising Standards – maternity leave cover for Ms McMahon), Ms McKenna (our new SENCO), Mrs Rebello (Graduate Teaching Assistant), Mr Evans (Science teacher), Mr McNee (History teacher), Miss Blackwood (RE teacher), Mr Iles (PE teacher) and Miss Lymn (Dance maternity cover). Ms Stroud, our Pastoral administrator is going to become a Pastoral Support Officer, and Ms Gillett, Student Welfare Officer will become Pastoral Administrator.

We have three new additions to the leadership team (including Mr Williams mentioned above) – Mr Child, our Designated Safeguarding and Attendance Lead has been promoted to Assistant Headteacher, and Ms Lee, who is currently an Associate Headteacher who will be acting as Assistant Head teacher for Behaviour and Culture.

We currently have vacancies for our Student Welfare role and our SEN administrator role. If you are interested or know anyone who is, please look on our website for details.

School day

From September, we have decided to return to having one school lunch break from 1:10pm to 1:40pm. This will allow students to use the courts which they really enjoy, which had not always been possible when lessons were running and allow a greater staff presence on duty. Period 4 will be from 12:10 to 1:10pm.

Holiday dates

Please be reminded that our holiday dates this coming year differ slightly from the Swindon Borough Council published dates. This is to ensure that the curriculum and schemes of learning can be delivered effectively and to allow us to fit in all our Christmas events. We are not able to authorise holidays taken in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and permission must be sought in advance. Fines will be issued by SBC for holidays taken in term time.

End of Year Rewards totals

The House totals for the end of the year are as follows:

- **Osprey: 105,565**
- Kingfisher: 95,481
- Eagle: 91,721
- Falcon: 73,056

Which means that **Osprey** have won the House cup this year!! Well done Osprey!! A non-uniform day will be coming your way.

Finally, we wish you a relaxing and safe holiday and look forward to seeing Year 7 on Tuesday 5th September and everyone else on Thursday 7th September.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Sherryl Bareham
Headteacher