

Dear Parents/Carers

This new academic year is now in full swing and there are a few pieces of information that I would like to share with you.

Firstly, I would like to thank those of you who responded to my last letter with ideas of how we can improve the ways in which we keep your children healthy and safe. I appreciate the time you took in responding and we will consider all the ideas that were shared with us. This year we are continuing to work hard to improve the use of planners for recording homework and passing messages between you and your child's tutor. We monitor this situation very carefully, and your child's tutor checks the planners every week. I would therefore be very grateful if you too could sign your child's planner each week so that you can read messages and monitor homework. I would also be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter and return it to your child's tutor so that we can gauge your feelings on the issues of homework and planners.

### **Uniform**

I would also like to thank all of you who made sure that your children returned to school in September in full school uniform. In our efforts to drive up standards, it is important that we maintain high standards of uniform but we will support cases where there is a genuine reason for not having the correct items. Please keep us informed if there are any problems by sending in a note so that we can issue a uniform card. A note in your child's planner would be absolutely fine. This will also help your child to avoid receiving a detention for not being in the correct uniform.

### **Attendance**

As you are aware, attendance is a major focus of our work because if the pupils are not at school, they cannot make progress and fulfil their potential. Overall, we have seen a good start to the school year, with improved rates of attendance in all year groups. Thank you for this and please keep it up! If your child has a genuine problem which is stopping them from attending school, please tell us about it and we will try to help. When looking at last year's attendance patterns, it became clear to us that attendance at school in all year groups dropped significantly on Fridays. The thought

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of a long weekend is appealing to us all, but if we are going to prepare our young people for the world of work, where attendance is expected 5 days a week, then it is important that they start these good habits whilst they are at school. I would therefore be very grateful if you could pay particular attention to any 'illness' which seems to strike only on Fridays! Thank you for your help with this. Punctuality is also important, especially as we run a lot of activities during morning registration to support pupils' development of literacy and numeracy skills, so please ensure that your child arrives at school promptly for an 8.30am registration. Can I also remind you that, unless in exceptional circumstances, we do not authorise holidays taken in term time.

### **Bullying**

Unfortunately bullying happens in every school but here at Woodlands we pride ourselves on the systems and support that we have in place to tackle this issue should it occur.

Bullying is deliberate and hurtful behaviour which is repeated over a period of time and results in those being bullied finding it very difficult to defend themselves. At Woodlands we try to stop any hurtful behaviour between students at the first stage before it becomes bullying. The Assistant Year Leaders, Tutors, Teachers and Year Leaders play a crucial role in this. We also have trained restorative mediators who can help to sort issues out between people. Should a student feel that they are being bullied we encourage them to speak out either to the school or parents so that we can tackle the problem. There are a number of support systems in place for students who feel bullied including the school staff, information on bullying in the student planner and a peer self help group run with the help of the NSPCC, "Bully Busters", which meets after school every Wednesday. Dave Thorpe, the Southampton City Anti-bullying Coordinator, is working with the school to introduce a programme called "U Turn" that will work with students who have been identified as "bullies" to help them to change the way they interact with others.

Should you have any further questions or wish to see the full version of the bullying policy please do not hesitate to contact the Assistant Year Leader for your child.

### **Ofsted**

I would like to inform you that the school is expecting an Ofsted inspection during this academic year. The last inspection took place in October 2006. Since then, Ofsted has introduced a new framework which has more stringent requirements, particularly in terms of safeguarding, attendance, attainment and progress. It is therefore now harder for schools to achieve the same judgments from the inspection as they did previously. We are likely to get only 48 hours notice of the inspection, but I will send home a letter when we know the exact date.

### **Governors**

After 9 years of service to the school as a governor, and in recent years, as the Chair of Governors, Martin Laux has resigned to start a new job in Scotland. Martin leaves with our very grateful thanks and our best wishes for his new job. The governors have therefore appointed Councillor Sue Blatchford as their new Chair and if you wish to make contact with her, please do so via the school. Following the resignation of Dave Jones as a parent governor, we now have a vacancy for a new parent governor. If you

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are interested in applying, please contact Jenny Edwards, Clerk to the Governors, at the school who will be happy to talk to you about the role.

**Assistant Year Leaders**

I am sorry to have to tell you that Mrs Laux is leaving us from her position of Assistant Year Leader for Year 8 to go and join her husband in Scotland. We have appointed her replacement, and I am delighted to tell you that as of 2<sup>nd</sup> November Mrs Stubbington will be the Assistant Year Leader of Year 8 and Mr Moss will be the Assistant Year Leader of Year 7. Please contact your child's Assistant Year Leader if you have any concerns that you would like to discuss with us.

**Important dates**

Year 7 Parents' Evening will be on October 22<sup>nd</sup> – details of the evening will follow nearer the time. The next Inset day is on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. On this day the school will be open for staff only. The school will be closed for half term on Monday October 26<sup>th</sup> for one week and we look forward to welcoming all pupils back to school at 8.30am on Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Anslow  
Headteacher