

Thursday 10th June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: We're on the home stretch!

I hope this letter finds you well, having enjoyed a restful and well deserved half term break. Term 6 has begun and in 31 school days this academic year will be over.

In the meantime, it is my pleasure to share with you several successes including record student numbers completing the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Expedition last term – all well on their way to achieving the full award. Our Year 10 Ten Tors Team have shown great resilience and teamwork to cover 31km in a single day to earn their medals in this year's event and Year 11 students have simply been superb in rising to the challenge of summer assessments, completed alongside the usual events that mark the end of their formal education.

It is with great pride that we said "goodbye" to Year 11 in their final assembly on Friday 28th May. (Although many have been back this week to complete coursework and additional assessments 😊)

A focus on 'High Expectations' in all things, coupled with your continued support, really has helped keep learning and well-being at the heart of what we do at Oak, and this letter is to give you an update on how we are further ensuring student success and growth in confidence as restrictions continue to ease and we move back to "normal."

New Staff Welcome

I am delighted to welcome 2 new colleagues to Oak, joining us this term to teach in Performing Arts and Humanities.

Ms Wendy Tweedle – Teacher of Dance
Mr Jeremy Lee – Teacher of Geography

Both have settled well and made an impressive start as we bring this year to a close.

Students Out of Bounds

Time has been spent educating students as to specific 'out of bounds' areas across what is a large site. Additional assemblies were delivered last term as a growing number of students, particularly in Years 7 and 10, were choosing to place themselves out of bounds at break and lunch. This creates a safeguarding concern and to reduce this risk we are logging all instances where a student is found out of bounds and operating a 3-strike rule – after the third strike a student loses all break and lunch time until a meeting takes place between parents and the academy.

On-site Truancy

Although this concern involves a very small number of students, the impact this has on staff time to chase, engage and encourage those that choose to truant to be in lessons is significant and cannot be sustained. Staff time should be spent on students that want to learn and are making all the correct choices in doing so. I have shared in assemblies this week that where students are persistently defiant through truancy, they face fixed term exclusion.

Oak Academy

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Mobile Phones and Headphones

There is no denying that mobile phones and tablets played a key role in the remote education of students during lockdown. At the same time, we have seen that students (and some adults too) have become too dependent on them and this is now affecting both their attitude and ability to learn.

We do recognise that mobile phones are commonplace among children and young people in society and many parents want to be able to contact their child and provide them with a phone. Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in lateness to lessons, lesson avoidance and open defiance towards staff because of mobile phone misuse. The same is true of headphones. Again, only small numbers of students, but their behaviour is affecting the learning and well-being of others.

Our policy states that headphones must not be worn at any time and that mobiles, if brought to Oak, need to be switched off and remain out of sight. Mobile phone use is only permitted in the canteen or on the playground during break and lunch.

There is a need to re-educate students on how phones are to be used in schools, or more importantly, how they must be out of sight and unheard when in lessons and moving around the site. The same is true of headphones.

In assemblies this week I have given a reminder to all students regarding our policy under the heading of "if we see it, you lose it" and staff are now confiscating mobiles and headphones until the end of the day if they are seen in corridors.

Where a mobile phone or headphone is seen in a lesson or "Ready to Learn," staff will request that the item is placed on the teacher's desk.

In all cases, where a student refuses to comply, they will be removed to "Ready to Learn" until they decide to hand the item over. In this way we hope to remove quite quickly the negative and disruptive behaviour that can occur in lessons when mobile phones are misused.

Confiscated items will be placed and sealed in envelopes with the student's name added and passed to the FLO office for collection at the end of the day.

Summer Uniform

And finally, with the beginning of much better weather, we can move into our 'summer uniform' phase– blazers are no longer required to be worn for the rest of this academic year. Students must not wear a hoody or any other jumper other than the Oak branded one in place of a blazer, although I suspect most students will welcome being able to arrive in just a shirt and tie. These still always need to be worn correctly though.

Your support remains a key element of our ongoing improvement and is very much appreciated. We are not introducing any new changes to policy or our rules in setting out the above expectations, but, having had students back with us for over 2 terms now, we're working hard in this home stretch to finish the year well.

Learning and well-being remain at the heart of what we do, and I hope you agree that working together continues to benefit the children and young adults in our care.

Wishing you all a positive end to the year!

Yours sincerely,



Richard Burgas
Principal