

The Matthew Arnold School



25th June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you are all well, and enjoying the rare moments of sunshine as they come along! It makes all the difference to us here in school when the weather co-operates with us and staff and students can make the most of time outside.

On that note, it has been heart-warming to see a gradual return of some of the extra-curricular activities that really round out a school education and are so crucial to children developing fully and enjoying the chance to focus on non-academic opportunities. This week has seen a very successful start to our own Euros competition for Y7 & 8 students at lunchtime. We had an isolated incident earlier on in the week with some inappropriate audience participation; the only reason I mention it here is that both year groups were reminded of expectations and behaviour has been exemplary since.

The drama and music departments (Miss Lockhart and Miss Heywood respectively) are organising a school production for next year, which is fantastic news, and auditions have started in plenty of time. We want as many students as possible to be involved, and although at the moment we are focusing on acting and singing or playing an instrument, there will be opportunities for a range of other roles such as set design and stage management further down the line.

After-school and lunchtime clubs are taking off again in a big way, which is lovely to see. We have children trying out roller hockey, futsal, cricket, boot camp to name but a few. Please do encourage your child to join in if they aren't already.

The response to uniform expectations has been wonderful, and I cannot thank you enough. I know it seems very strict, but you will know as well as I do that if you don't stick to your word, children very quickly start to push the boundaries again - it is human nature! We are now only really working with a handful of students who are finding it hard to accept that we mean what we say. I know that some students are hoping that the focus on skirts being worn properly (no rolling at all) will go away, but it won't! I am in discussions with our uniform providers to offer a broader selection of styles and lengths and will keep you all posted.

Year 10 exams have now been completed, and teachers are working to mark and moderate papers as quickly as possible. The response has been mixed from students, which is what we expected, and I take the opportunity to remind parents in all year groups that the impact of lockdown will continue to be felt for a long time. The purpose of exams and assessments at this stage is for us to know what we need to put in place, both for all students as well as for individuals. Working in such close

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collaboration with the BET schools means that I have immediate communication regarding government plans for future exams (in our case GCSEs). As you know, I also have the greatest respect for my colleagues at local secondaries, and we are in close and frequent contact. We will all endeavour to ensure that our approach - a balance between academic catch-up and the needs of the whole child - puts each and every student in the best possible position for success.

I will give you all details of how we propose to use government catch-up funding (summer schools, tutoring, extra time on the curriculum) when we are clear how and when they propose to allocate it.

We now have three more full weeks of term left (we break up on Tuesday 20th July for the summer) and our mantra will be 'work hard and play hard' - challenge and progress in lessons and homework and maximum participation in extra-curricular activities. Year 10 students will spend the week beginning 12th July doing virtual work experience, which we have said they may do from home.

An early reminder that the new academic year begins on Monday, 6th September at 08.40. New Y7 students will have an induction day on Friday, 3rd September. Please look on the website and follow our social media for all details as they are finalised.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to tell you that the CEO of the Bourne Education Trust, Alex Russell, was awarded an OBE in this year's honours lists for services to education. I am proud and privileged to work alongside such an inspirational and dedicated leader, a man of integrity whom I know well to be utterly dedicated to the wellbeing and success of every child who comes through his schools.

I will write again before the end of term, but in the meantime, I wish you all a very pleasant weekend and the best possible outcome as the Euros reach the knockout stages!

With very best wishes

Mary Gould
Headteacher