



Ref: MS/ES

13 July 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

Recently we had the official opening ceremony of our new building, where we enjoyed hearing from our guest speaker Carol Malia, and watching some excellent music and drama performances from our students. During the proceedings, where Mayor Norma Redfearn performed the official opening, we heard various figures about the construction of the new building: 1295 tonnes of concrete; 10318 tonnes of aggregates; 40 miles of data cabling for IT systems; 604 panes of glass; 204,152 man hours to build. And 7600. This is the number of hours that typically a student will spend in Marden High School, and of course our fantastic new building gives us the high quality environment, resources and spaces to ensure the time students spend in it is used to maximum effect. So what is it that we want our young people to spend their time doing here?

The long view I suppose is to become someone who will find a fulfilling and purposeful role in their adult life, someone who has a sense of belonging, who will contribute to society, and who will pave the way for further generations to live in peace and fulfilment. But it is also very much about the now - about every single one of our students being a happy and engaged young person who is enjoying their teenage years, and achieving their potential so they move on to the next stage of their education with qualifications that reflect their effort and ability.

A good school gets its students good qualifications, but in addition a great school opens its students' eyes to all of the different opportunities that are available to them. And that's what we want for our children here - to take those opportunities and to go out and find them. As I often say to the children in assembly - "100% of the shots you don't take, don't go in". In other words, get involved, give it a go, and discover where your strengths lie. You will be able to see in our latest newsletter some great examples of our children taking these opportunities.

Part of the privilege of my job as Head Teacher is being able to see what goes on in classrooms across the school on a daily basis and it has been wonderful to see creative, exciting lessons throughout this term, taking advantage of the light, airy learning environments we enjoy here. And so it was with great pride that I was able recently to show the OFSTED inspectors around our great school, and I am pleased to say they were suitably impressed. The inspection went very well and I hope very soon to be able to communicate to you the findings and the judgement, once this is in the public domain.

As I have said previously, learning is at the heart of all we do, and so it is fitting that learning is the priority for our School Development Plan, and I would like to share with you objectives taken from this document for next academic year. Whilst standards in classrooms at Marden are already high, these are areas that we want to build on so that the learning that students experience is consistently outstanding across all classes. Targets included in our School Development Plan next year are that:

- Teachers consistently take into account what students have already learned, using assessment information to plan and differentiate effectively
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve demonstrating appropriate challenge for all including stretching and challenging our most able students
- High quality feedback is consistent across the school so that it helps students to improve their learning
- Increasing the literacy skills of students in all subject areas

In addition to reports and contact with your child's teachers, I hope that you will be able to see high expectations, challenge, the quality of feedback, and the development of literacy skills reflected in your child's books, as we have now changed the policy regarding exercise books going home - your child should now be bringing exercise books home with them. We regard this as an important part of you as a parent receiving information about what they are doing in school and about the progress they are making.

An important part of a child's learning is what they do at home, and so we have had a review of homework this term and there will be some changes for September. There will not be as many of the longer pieces of 'Independent Study' work – these will be restricted to art and drama. They will be replaced by shorter pieces of work – called homework - which will link with what students have been doing in class and which will therefore consolidate learning. Whilst shorter, this work will be given more frequently and so it will be important for children to use their planners to record their homework and stick to deadlines, developing essential skills for later in life. Homework timetables will be published on the school website, replacing the 'Independent Study' tab on the home page.

From September we will have slightly adjusted times of the day. Whilst keeping the same start and finish times, your child's form time and assembly time will be first thing in the morning at 8.45am rather than in the afternoon. During this time Form Tutors will be going through routines, checks and activities to ensure all our students are ready to maximise their learning for the day.

September also sees the official start of our House system. There has already been a lot of work behind the scenes in setting up the four Houses which have been named after the four castles of Alnwick, Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh and Warkworth. The House system will be a great opportunity for students to get involved in a variety of subject based competitions which will earn them house points, both for themselves and for their House. It will also be a chance for us all to further celebrate our achievements through the House assemblies which will take place each half term.

It has been good to see more and more parents getting involved with school life this year, not least in taking part in various PTA events. The success of the PTA has not only brought people together as part of the school community, but also been a great support to a variety of school events which have taken place across the year, at the same time as raising money which we will be able to use to support our students.

We have included an information sheet on uniform in our latest newsletter as a reminder of what the expectations are. Generally our students look very smart in their ties and blazers and this reflects the high standards that we all expect from our young people and I appreciate your support in maintaining these standards.

Students will be finishing early on our last day of the year, Friday 21 July at 1.30pm, to allow staff to make presentations to those who are leaving. We have a staff training day on Monday 4 September, so the first day back for all students is Tuesday 5 September, at the normal starting time of 8.45, when students will meet their tutors in form rooms.

I hope that you all have an enjoyable and safe summer and look forward to seeing everybody, smart and refreshed, in September.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Snape
Headteacher