



Marden High School

Friday 24 September 2021

Dear All,

It has been a great start to the new academic year, with everyone settling back well into familiar routines and hard work. It has been good to be in classes and see students so well focused on their learning, something that parents of Year 6 children have commented upon as they have been touring the school this week. As you are aware, we have introduced a number of new opportunities to support students this year, including Globalbridge, SkillsBuilder and School Gateway. Parents and staff will be getting used to these gradually as we go through the year, so please don't worry if you are not up to speed straight away with these aspects of school life. I am sure that we will all be more familiar with them by the time we reach the end of the year, so that we can celebrate the benefits to our children.

Recently we have had a team of Year 10 students who have become our Healthy Habits Ambassadors, and so far they have been providing superb leadership in producing a video for the new Year 7 students that will help them understand where they can go if they need any help with anything, and includes how they can ensure good mental and emotional health, get homework help, and support for lots of other things too. The Year 10 Ambassadors have also visited Year 7 in their Form Time to talk to them about the video, and in their words:

'We want to make sure everyone feels included and safe at school, and that nobody feels like they don't fit in or that they are falling behind. If you do need any help, please visit a teacher, like your head of year or your form tutor, or maybe even some of your new friends! We hope you enjoy your years at Marden as it really is an amazing school.'

As you are aware, we have recently introduced School Gateway which will allow us to provide improved communication to parents and carers in the convenience of a single system. This can be accessed via the School Gateway website or by downloading the app to your mobile phone or tablet, links to which can be found on our new school website, launching next week. School Gateway will allow parents and carers to view their child's attendance, achievements, reports, timetable, and to book extra curricular clubs, as well as provide access to useful links for booking parents evening appointments and our payment system, ParentPay. With this new system in place, we will be discontinuing the use of our

current parent portal as of 1 October, and we would like all parents and carers to register with School Gateway. Parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children's learning and we look forward to your continued support.

Each week on Monday mornings we have our silent reading in Form Time, and we see this as a very important time to settle into and focus for the week ahead. Dedicated reading time like this really does help to build some very important skills, as well as encouraging reading for pleasure. Reading helps develop decoding, fluency, vocabulary, sentence construction, and reasoning, as well as boosting working memory and attention. When we read, attention allows us to take in information from the text. Working memory allows us to hold on to that information and use it to gain meaning and build knowledge from what we are reading. The ability to self-monitor while reading is also tied to that. We all need to be able to recognise when we don't understand something. We then need to stop, go back, and re-read to clear up any confusion we may have, thus taking our understanding to a new, deeper level. So the simple strategy of making a little time for reading can have huge benefits, and I hope that our students will continue to develop this habit at home. It's also a great way for parents, carers and children to spend quality time together.

This week's assembly continued the school trilogy of 'Hope, Leadership and Agency' with 'Hope' being the focus. We listened to stories from around the world of both sportspeople and those in the world of medicine who have had hope and used it to improve not only their own lives, but importantly the lives of others. We were also reminded of the story of Malala Yousafzai and her continued efforts to ensure the safe education for all girls around the world. After all we have learned and done together over the past 18 months during the pandemic, it remains a highlight of my day to see the hope with which our community approaches life. The optimism and persistence outlined in some of the stories in the assembly, such as Marcus Rashford's work around Free School Meals, and Raheem Stirling's work to ensure equality for all, are inspirations for us all, and are reflected in the work we do here at Marden each day.

You may remember that earlier this year, The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, asked all children in England to complete a survey, to show the true voice of this generation. This was advertised to all our students and I was pleased to hear that many of our children contributed, exercising their voice and sense of agency. The results are in and The Children's Commissioner would like to say thank you. Over half a million children responded, the largest survey of its kind in history, and at a landmark moment for young people growing up in this country. I would certainly encourage everyone to read the summary, which is clearly painting a picture of Hope, Agency and Leadership, and I think it is worth giving just a flavour of it here:

“A generation of children who are veterans of a global crisis. They have seen how colossally frightening life can be, far too young, and have made a lot of sacrifices. But they have endured, and are emerging stronger and prematurely wise.

They want to be healthy – mentally and physically. They want to escape the digital labyrinth in which they have been trapped. This report tells you that they want to be outside – to be in open spaces, and play.”

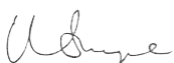
This report is a useful one for us, and sits alongside our own findings from student voice exercises that we do here at Marden. We look forward to continuing to work with children, parents and carers to ensure that all important mental and physical well being.

It has been good to get some very positive feedback from 'Marden High Question Time' which was broadcast this week, for prospective parents. It is available for viewing in the This is Marden section of our website.

This week students in Year 10 have been doing their Yellis assessment. The test assesses for key cognitive areas in vocabulary, maths, non-verbal ability, and the skills of proofreading, perceptual speed and accuracy. The results of these tests will help us set students targets for GCSE, as well as helping them develop in certain areas. The results will be shared with students, teachers, parents and carers.

I am delighted to announce that our school orchestra will be starting again on Mondays after school. We have always had enthusiastic players for the orchestra, and I am sure that anyone who has heard them play in the past will agree that the standard they reached was excellent. If any student plays an instrument and can read a little bit of music, then they are very welcome to come along and join in. Mr Sankey is looking forward to seeing players from past orchestras as well as any newer musicians who may not have tried this before.

Thank you for your continued support and take care.



Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher