

September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

May I begin by wishing all of you well at the start of this new academic year. It has been a pleasure to welcome pupils back into school and a particular joy to welcome those who have just joined us, whether that is in Year 7 or in other year groups.

Exam Success

I am pleased to reflect on some wonderful results for sixth form and Yr11 pupils this summer. At a time when nationally there is volatility in examination results because of new subject requirements at both A level and GCSE, our pupils have achieved some strong results.

- At A level, the high standards that were set in 2017 have been maintained. Over 62.5 % of A level results were at A*-B grade and 41.3% at A* or A grade. These are, by any measure, outstanding results.
- At GCSE, pupils sat reformed qualifications at GCSE level for the first time. I am pleased to report that attainment is above national average and the number of pupils achieving 7+ (A grade or better using previous measures) rose significantly. There were many individual successes that enabled pupils to move successfully to either Sixth Form, Further Education, Apprenticeships or into the world of work.

New school building

I am pleased to report that planning permission has been granted for our new £15 million school building. The building will be home to our STEAM subjects (Science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) and sports and will provide pupils with the facilities they deserve. Importantly the building work will not interfere with the education of pupils and the normal running of the school. Work is due to commence on the building in October this year and the planned opening date is January 2020. We will be keeping you informed with regular updates as the work progresses.

<http://www.whickhamschool.org/new-school-build/>

2018 - 19 School Improvement Plan

This document is now available on our school website and outlines our priorities for the coming year. The document also details some of the key strategies we will use in achieving our goals. Our plan is split into four areas that we believe are fundamental to ensuring your child is effectively supported in being the best they can be. These objectives are for us all, staff, parents / carers and pupils to strive towards. The key objectives are:

1. Everyone is a leader who demonstrates the school values.
2. Everyone always ensures a culture of learning that engages, excites and inspires.
3. Everyone always works effectively to achieve beyond expectations.
4. Everyone always ensures that all barriers to learning are addressed.

Home – school partnership

Strong and positive relationships between school staff and parents / carers are key to all Whickham pupils being safe, happy and successful learners. I would therefore like to foreground both our commitment to supporting you and your son or daughter whilst also reminding you of some of the systems we use.

- Parent/Carers' Forum. This group is made up of parents / carers and meets on the second Monday every half term at 6pm. Mr Rumney and Miss Enlund lead the group and there is an open invitation to the meetings which provide an opportunity to ask questions and receive ongoing information about the school. Our next forum is on Monday 17th September at 6pm.
- School Comms is the parent portal (smartphone app and website) which gives greater flexibility for the school to keep you up to date and informed in a more effective way. Information is available on the school website to demonstrate how to download the smartphone app and activate your secure school account. <http://www.whickhamschool.org/parents/school-comms/> If there have been any changes of address or contact numbers over the summer for your child, you can update them via this portal.
- ClassCharts is the secure smartphone app that allows you to see your child's achievements and to track their homework. Log in details have been sent to all parents/carers but if you need a reminder, please contact the school office. <http://www.classcharts.com/parent/login>
- ParentPay and our cashless catering system. ParentPay enables parents and carers to pay for trips, school meals and other activities online thus reducing the need for cash to be brought into school by your child. Information on how to register for ParentPay is available on the school website, or you can ring the school finance office for further details. <http://www.whickhamschool.org/parents/parent-pay/>
- The Whickham Way. Our termly newsletter keeps you up to date with things that are going on in school. This is published in the last week of each term and is available on the school website. <http://www.whickhamschool.org/news/>

Our aim is to ensure that any questions you have are answered and the support you need is provided, therefore reminders of the contact details of key pastoral staff have been provided below.

Year Group	Year leader	Telephone extension	E-mail address
7	S Berry	211	berryswst@whickhamschool.org
8	G White	214	gwhite@whickhamschool.org
9	C Enlund	217	enlunc@whickhamschool.org
10	T Bensley	216	abensley@whickhamschool.org
11	J Douglas	212	jdouglas@whickhamschool.org
12	I Turnbull	337	turnbulli@whickhamschool.org
13	L Cooper	336	lcooper@whickhamschool.org

Attendance

Ensuring excellent attendance for all our pupils is a school priority. The attendance target for every pupil in the school is 98% or higher, which means fewer than 4 days absence in an academic year. The majority of our students do achieve this and additionally there were 159 pupils who achieved 100% attendance in the last academic year. Congratulations to them and their families.

Requests for Leave of Absence

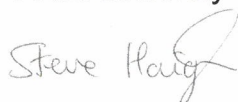
Any request for a leave of absence for a student must be made on the appropriate form (available from Heads of Year or from the school website in the section marked "Parents"). Requests should be made at least four weeks prior to the proposed absence. Leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. When leave of absence is not requested or leave is taken without approval the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team for legal action. This would put you at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice.

Where there are attendance concerns we look to work with students and parents/carers to avoid this potential situation. If you have any attendance queries please consult your child's Head of Year or the school's Attendance Officer, Mrs Tillet-Hayes on Ext 244.

Please be mindful that any absence from school, other than planned educational activities, will affect a young person's academic achievement.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Steve Haigh
Headteacher