

February 2012

Dear Parents and Carers,

At the end of what has been a short but very busy term I would like to take the opportunity to go through a number of recent issues with parents and also to inform you about events in, what looks like being, an even busier term in the run-up to Easter.

Exams

There have been a substantial number of exams in this period, and attendance has been very good despite the numerous bugs there seem to have been. I would like to thank parents for helping to ensure that exam entries are not wasted. Regrettably a significant minority of students are regularly coming to exams without a black pen, pencil and/or calculator for some exams. This has become so prevalent a problem that we will now write to all parents concerned in future every time this occurs. All students in Years 10 and 11 have recently been issued their exam timetables for the March and Summer series – **please ensure you have signed and returned the green copy and that on the exam day your son/daughter leaves the house with all the necessary equipment.**

Water

In the last few weeks we have had a number of issues with the College water supply. The first affected many other houses locally and we had little control over this. Unfortunately we had no warning of this until after buses had started collecting students so we could not have closed for the day. We made the best arrangements that we could and planned to shut early if need be, but the problem was rectified before that was necessary.

More recently we have had a leak in our own supply. Again we considered all options including closure, however we felt that we could manage the situation well enough to enable the College to function while the repair was effected.

Neither case was ideal, and we would like to reassure parents that we take such situations very seriously. However, where we feel that we can safely continue functioning – albeit with some inconvenience to staff and students alike – we will always endeavour to do so.

Trips

The ski trip leaves tomorrow and we have recently held a meeting about our next trip to Kenya in 2013. Trips to Arcachon and Denmark are planned for this Summer and the French Exchange is about to take place. On a smaller scale students have been on trips to neighbouring schools to find out about Oxbridge entry and university applications. Students at College have access to a good range of trips and extra-curricular activities and both the planning and execution of these usually go smoothly.

However, Year 7 parents may have picked up that we have cancelled a trip to two local castles for February 10, as part of the Castles project that students are currently engaged in. This was to be the Year 7 activity on a curriculum enrichment day. Unfortunately we ran into a problem with English Heritage and had to cancel the trip the day we issued letters to students. Apologies if this resulted in confused students and a confused message at home. One consequence of this is that we have had to rethink this day. Most KS3 students will follow a normal timetable.

Year 9 and Year 10 Options (Friday 24 February) – see over

Year 9 and Year 10 Options (Friday 24 February)

We have now sought initial views (preferences) from all Year 9 and Year 10 students about the Options programme for next year. The final Options forms will be issued in the week after half-term, with the main Year 9 Options Day taking place on Friday 24 February.

Please Note: This is a College day for Year 9 students only.

Parents of Year 9 students are invited to join their children from 12.30 for a series of Options talks and a subject-based parents meeting in the afternoon. We will aim to finish as normal at 3.30pm. Parents of Year 10 students are also welcome to come and find out more about Option C subjects between 12.30 and 1.30.

Work to be done at home on the Friday will be set for Years 7 and 8 on the Thursday. It will also be available on the College website. This should be returned to tutors during the following week.

Year 10 and 11 students should have plenty to do at this stage, including revision for exams the following week.

We are very conscious that the government is making frequent announcements about exams and courses that might be worrying parents. If you are concerned about Options because of recent government announcements, particularly surrounding vocational qualifications, the EBacc or the 'value' of courses then Mr Dearden will be holding a talk with question and answer session from 12.00 in the Hall, while the students are having lunch. This will be a repeat of information the students will have had in the morning and will finish by 12.30 so you can get to the Options talks and focus solely on what will be studied and whether it is the right course for your child.,

There will also be information about the Functional Skills exams in Y9 in ICT and English available on that day.

The final part of the afternoon will give you an opportunity to meet subject teachers to discuss the report that will be issued the day before.

Lost property and lockers.

In response to student demand we have provided more lockers. There are still some spare. There is also a large pile of lost property, most of which is unnamed.

e-Safety

This week has been marked by assemblies looking at the serious issue of how students can keep themselves safe when using the Internet. The theme of this year's National e-safety week is '*Connecting generations and educating each other*'. We cannot stress enough the importance of parents knowing what their children are doing on-line. Students should be at least 13 years of age to sign up to Facebook, and some students are not fully aware how public their information and pictures are when they are on the internet. It is vital that parents take this opportunity of discussing this directly with their son/daughter in the light of these assemblies. Further information can be found under the **Parents tab** on the College website. I particularly recommend www.thinkuknow.co.uk

The Governing Body, College Management and Adult and Community Education would like to see extended use of the College facilities by the wider community. Further to this we propose to hold an open meeting for interested parties, chaired by our Chair of Governors Andrew Critchlow, it will be held on Wednesday 28 March at 19.30 hours.

Yours faithfully



Mr B Hunter
Principal



Healthy Schools

Uniform Consultation, December 2011

Many thanks to the parents who took part in this consultation. I hope parents feel that the College has both sought the views of students and parents and acted upon them. The result of the consultation is that

the College will not be changing its uniform for the foreseeable future.

I have summarised the results of this round of consultation below, and it is clear from these that there is no strong mandate for change.

A number of parents were very critical of the proposals, many suggesting that the Summer consultation should have led us to this 'no change' position anyway. Whilst we would not disagree that we could have easily ended the discussion after the Summer consultation there was a strong mandate from both parents and students to explore

- a) some element of House identity
- b) the use of natural materials

even if these ideas appeared to contradict the raw numbers answering particular questions. The PTFA AGM discussed the survey results and asked the College to explore further. Staff, like parents, have a wide range of views and there has not been a steer from the College management in one direction or the other on this matter.

The proposal we put forward combined both of these ideas. Trutex are clear that we could not easily (cost-effectively) include a (relatively subtle) House identity into the existing uniform, because of the manufacturing process/materials.

Parents may be aware that a great many schools change uniform with no consultation, including many of those that have recently converted to academies. This is an issue on which any two people generally might not agree and what we must now do is move forward, accepting the policy as it stands and supporting the College in ensuring students look presentable and are in uniform. To that end I have included a reminder of the current uniform below, taken from parent guides to each year.

Results of the consultation:

Do you support the proposed changes in principle?

- 42 yes (representing 45 students)
- 3 unsure (representing 4 students)
- 47 no (representing 51 students)

A total of 530 forms were given out, Y11 students were not given forms. Although a statistically significant number of responses it is far fewer than last Summer and is clearly not decisive. At this point, therefore, we are closing the subject and will not revisit it for some time.

Points raised (on both sides) included concerns over cost, washing, not liking yellow/blue/red, increasing rivalry between houses, concern over the durability of the material, and many other views - some of which I am not able to print. I hope parents would all agree that it behoves all of us to respond in a manner that would set an example as to how we would want the students to respond if their views were asked for in writing.

The College Dress Code

College dress is a simple navy or grey sweatshirt with a navy or grey polo shirt underneath, embroidered with the College logo representing Mam Tor, Lose Hill and Win Hill.

Students may wear near-knee length skirts, trousers or jeans of their choice in plain blue or plain black ie no stripes or big logos. College fleeces (also with logo) are optional for cold weather. Plain blue or black shorts are perfectly acceptable in hot weather but should be near-knee length for protection in laboratories and workshops. Students who are members of House Captain teams are allowed to wear hooded sweatshirts with the relevant lettering on the back. Once inside the building, coats and non-uniform tops should be removed.

Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service

New Spring term classes in the Hope Valley

Time to 'Get On Course' and try something new!

(courses are at Hope Valley College unless otherwise stated)

Practical Gardening. Mondays 9.30 –11.30 am (6 weeks). Starts 20th Feb

Lip Reading – Thursday 10 –12 noon. Free tuition. You can join at any time

External Plastering WEEKEND - At Aston Industrial Estate (near Hope). Rendering and Pebble Dashing. March 10th/11th

Plastering – City & Guilds Level 1 Award. Wednesday evenings at Aston Industrial Estate, starting Feb. 29th;

Plastering City & Guilds Level 1 Certificate – Daytime course starts Monday March 12th. 2 days a week for 8 weeks. Free tuition for anyone on Job Seekers' Allowance or without a Full Level 2 Qualification.

Welding City & Guilds. Levels 1, 2 and 3. New courses starting Monday 5.30 pm (March 12th); Monday 9.30 am (April 16th); and Thursday evening (April 19th)

Computers – Introduction to Apple Macs – Thursday 22nd March 1.15- 3.15pm

Other new courses will start after Easter. Look out for our summer brochure, available soon from the College and local shops.

If you are interested in **Childcare** courses, please contact us. We are putting on a range of courses in the area, all leading to qualifications, and we may be able to help you achieve what you need.

To book your place on a course, or to find out more, ring the Community Education Office at Hope Valley College on 01433 620662 or e mail communityed@hopevalley.derbyshire.sch.uk

For information about courses across the county, go to www.derbyshire.gov.uk/adulteducation or ring 08456 058 058