

20<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Parent,

I would like to begin this letter by offering my thanks to you for supporting myself and staff at the Academy in the drive to improve standards over recent months.

I appreciate that for some parents some of the decisions that we have made, and the introduction of some of our revised rules and procedures, may have been difficult to appreciate but I can absolutely assure you that the impact of these changes has been incredible. One of the methods that we use to evaluate the effectiveness of our work is through surveying both pupils and staff that work at the Academy. The latest survey was undertaken three weeks prior to the end of the summer term; below are some key findings from those surveys, which you may find interesting.

**Staff Survey** – the figure in brackets indicates the percentage recorded in the May survey.

- 93% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are proud to be a member of staff in the Academy (93%)
- All respondents agree or strongly agree that behaviour is improving in the Academy (100%)
- 99% of respondents agree or strongly agree that behaviour is good in this school (67%)
- 90% of respondents agree or strongly disagree that the behaviour of pupils is consistently well managed (70%)
- 98% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they know what we are trying to achieve as a school (97%)
- 95% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the school is well led and managed (82%)

The pupil survey told us that the vast majority of pupils in the Academy agreed or strongly agreed that;

- I am proud to be a pupils at Smith's Wood Academy
- Children are safe in their lessons at this school
- Children are safe at lunch and break times at this school
- There is an adult in this school that I can talk to if I have a problem
- If bullying is reported staff deal with the problem
- Behaviour in lessons is improving in this school
- Behaviour in corridors is improving in this school
- I understand the school rules; I am clear about what is expected of me
- Teachers expect me to work hard and do my best
- Feedback and assessments by my teachers helps me to know how to improve
- I am taught well

I hope you agree that these are very pleasing statistics and give us a positive foundation from which to build moving forward into the next academic year. The views of pupils, staff and parents are genuinely important to us. Mr Cornell, Vice Principal, hopes to establish a Parent's Forum next term so that we can better work together with parents for the benefit of the children. If you feel that you could commit an hour or two each half term to meet and discuss school improvement with Mr Cornell then please register your interest via email to Caroline Schilling (PA to the Head of Academy) - [s215cschilling@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk](mailto:s215cschilling@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk)

I would also like to offer an open invite to any parents that would like to visit the Academy and observe first-hand the positive changes that have happened. Again, please contact Mrs Schilling who will be happy to arrange an appointment with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. You will be welcome to tour the Academy, observe social times and visit lessons

**Academy Uniform** – with reference to my previous letter regarding uniform, I would like to remind you of the expectations for September.

All pupils must wear the new Academy tie – I will provide a tie for all existing pupils in September. Pupils must wear their old tie until the new tie is issued. New Year 7 pupils must purchase their own tie from Clive Marks.

All pupils must wear a blazer – either the existing Smith's Wood Sports College blazer or the new Academy blazer. New Year 7 pupils must wear the new Academy blazer.

All pupils must wear a white collared school shirt – short or long sleeve are both acceptable.

Girls must wear the Academy trousers or Academy skirt, available only from Clive Mark. Skirts may be worn with short or knee length socks in black or white or tights that are either black or skin-coloured.

Boys must wear smart black tailored trousers.

All pupils must carry an Academy school bag.

Please be reminded that hair should not be cut in an unusual fashion and boy's hair must be cut no shorter than a grade 2. Pupils are not permitted to dye their hair unless it is dyed in a natural hair colour. Visible make-up is not permitted and pupils may only wear a wrist-watch and a pair of small metal stud earrings.

Shoes must be black and polish-able and must not have any decoration.

Any pupil not in full Academy uniform will be isolated within the Academy until the issue is rectified – this includes girls not wearing the Academy skirt or trousers or any pupil not carrying the Academy bag. Please refer to our uniform policy for further guidance.

**Marking** – I would like to also inform you of some key changes that we are making in relation to the feedback that pupils receive from their teachers. Educational evidence and research tells us that the marking of pupils' books has limited impact on the progress that pupils make. The most effective thing that a teacher can do to enhance progress is to provide pupils with 'deep feedback' on the work they have completed in lessons, immediately after they have completed it.

From September, teachers will only physically mark and provide detailed written feedback on assessments and examinations. Instead, teachers will be trained to provide pupils with 'live in-lesson feedback' during a lesson and 'deep feedback' following a lesson. This means that pupils can expect a teacher, in the lesson, to provide feedback individually to them on their work and to feedback to the class collectively on their work. It will also allow teachers to pick up on, and address, any errors that children are making immediately and address straight away.

Following each lesson teachers will look at the books of every child in their class and make notes on their learning in readiness for the next lesson. This will allow teachers to tailor lessons that meet the needs of each child much more effectively.

In summary, children will receive less written feedback but much more individualised, personal feedback in a more timely fashion so that any mistakes or misconceptions do not become embedded.

**Lunch-time arrangements** – please remember that all pupils will remain on the Academy site from September. Unfortunately, no exceptions can be made. This is so that we can both ensure pupils' safety but also to capitalise on this additional time to prepare pupils for their GCSE examinations.

Please note that from September we will no longer be able to offer breakfast free of charge to children; however, pupils will still be able to purchase breakfast items from 8.00am.

**Punctuality and Attendance** – from September a pupil will be deemed to be late if they are not in the Academy building by 8.35am. Any pupil arriving after 8.35am will be issued with a same day detention of half an hour. After 9.00am pupils will receive a 1-hour same day detention.

**Behaviour** – our revised behaviour policy has been highly successful in ensuring that teachers can teach and pupils can learn. Those pupils who prevent learning from happening through poor behaviour are simply not permitted into their lessons. The existing 'Levels' system for managing behaviour in lessons will continue, however, the current system allows for children to receive four levels or warnings in a lesson before they are removed and 'sent to' another teacher's classroom to work. From September the maximum number of levels that a child can be awarded will be three; once they receive a 'level 3' they will be removed to the isolation room.

Detentions issued will continue to be held on the same day, with the exception of detentions issued after 1.30pm which will be served the following day. Parents will be informed of detentions using the existing text message service. It is the responsibility of pupils to attend detentions; failure to do so will be classed as a 'refusal' and will result in an internal isolation.

**Banned Items** - a polite reminder

The following items are defined by the Academy as being 'banned items' and as such are not permitted on site, at any time. This list may be added to over time and any updates will be found in the Academy Behaviour Policy.

**Banned items include;** mobile phones, smart watches and activity trackers, MP3 players, headphones, fizzy and energy drinks, sweets and biscuits (except biscuits within a packed lunch), jewellery (except a wrist-watch and one pair of plain metal stud earrings), toys and gadgets of any description (except those issued by the SEND department), hats, gloves and coats worn or carried within the building, pouches.

**Prohibited items** as identified in the Behaviour Policy will be confiscated and reported to the Police.

Banned items seen by any staff member will be confiscated using the current 'red bag' system but will not be returned until a parent has met with a member of SLT or Head/Deputy Head of House. Please be aware that this meeting will be scheduled, and will have to be planned around existing commitments. **We will not be able to see parents or carers without a prior appointment.**

**Key dates**

Please find below key term, examination and parent review dates for your diary.

- Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September: autumn term begins for all year groups
- Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September: year 7 and 11 photographs
- Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September: year 11 study skills workshop for pupils and families
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October: half term ends
- Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October: half term begins
- Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October: year 11 mock exam results collection
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December: year 11 mock exam results collection
- Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December: year 11 and 13 parents' evening

- Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December: end of autumn term
- Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January: teacher training day
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January: spring term begins for all year groups
- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January: year 10 parents' evening
- Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January: year 8 parents' evening
- Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February: half term ends
- Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February: half term begins
- Monday 26<sup>th</sup> March: year 11 mock exam results collection
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March: year 7 parents' evening
- Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March: end of spring term
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April: summer term begins
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May: year 9 parents' evening
- May, June and July: GCSE and end of year examinations
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July: end of summer term

**Start of term times – all pupils start back on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September**

**Year 7 pupils** – to arrive between 8.00am and 8.30am. Pupils to be on the yard and ready for line up at 8.35am. Assembly will take place from 8.40am – 9.00am.

All other pupils to arrive between 9.15am and 9.30am. Pupils to be on the yard and ready for line up at 9.35am. Year 11 pupils to go straight to their tutor group base.

**Year 8 pupils** - assembly will take place from 9.40am – 10.00am on Wednesday.

**Year 9 pupils** - assembly will take place from 11.20am – 11.40am on Wednesday.

**Year 10 pupils** - assembly will take place from 2.00pm – 2.20pm on Wednesday.

**Year 11 pupils** - assembly will take place from 8.40am – 9.00am on Thursday.

I do hope that you and your family have a lovely summer and that the children enjoy their summer break. I am very proud of all we have achieved together over the last two terms and I am very excited about the new academic year and all it will bring. This school is a great place to be and I have every confidence that it will go from strength to strength if we keep working together.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs K Craig  
Head of Academy