

Weekly Parent Update

Focus School Stoke Poges Campus

Week Ending: 4th September 2015

Welcome to a new term

Welcome to the first parent update of the year. We were very pleased to open the school to our students into the newly renovated buildings, which look very smart and professional. I feel privileged to be your new Headteacher and take my duty of care very seriously in ensuring we continue to build on the good work under Mrs. Smith's leadership. I look forward to meeting you in the up and coming weeks and supporting the future educational needs of your children. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any queries.



School Results

Well done students! The School was very pleased to see an 11% improvement in GCSE grades this year with students achieving 90% 5 A*-C including English and Maths at GCSE. Such high achievement was an acknowledgment of both the students and staff's hard work and the nurturing environment provided by the community. At 'A' level we had many individual success stories but recognise we have room to improve and this will be a main focus for the up and coming academic year.

Examinations

It can sometimes be purposeful for a Year 12 student to request a copy of the paper they sat to inform their future learning, especially if they are planning on resitting a unit. There is an expense to this and a script costs £12.50. If your son/daughter would like to request a paper can they first see their teacher and then place their request with Alison Elliott, who will co-ordinate all requests with the exam boards on behalf of the school.

Maths

It is really important to us as a school that we support our students to achieve well in their learning. We recognise that the early years of mathematical studies are a really important foundation to ensure students can progress to be their best. We also understand that students have different ways of working, especially when it comes to mathematics and some students may glide through their studies, whereas others can achieve very well but need a little longer to grasp the concepts. In Year 7 and 9 we will be team teaching our students to ensure work is at an appropriate pace and enables all our students to become competent in their studies.

In Year 7 students will be taught by John Aygeman supported by Pamela Chimutwi and in Year 9, students will be taught by Turaj Tahmassebi and supported by Heather Tucker. We will review progress with students in the first 4 weeks of term so we can ensure we can keep adapting to meet their learning needs and they are happy in their learning. Any questions don't hesitate to contact me.

Environment

The community have been working tirelessly to improve the school environment over the summer holidays. A particular thank you to Graham Robertson and his team of parents and students who have revamped the interiors. When you next visit the school I think you will all agree their work has made a huge impact on the feel of the place.

Weekly Parent Update

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My aim is for Stoke Poges Campus to offer an environment that shows us off to our professional best and a credit to all staff and students, whilst retaining the warmth and heartbeat which is evident when you first walk through the door.

School IT Update

Projectors for teaching have been installed into every classroom along with three electronic whiteboards in Science, Mathematics and English. Once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ronnie Markham and his team in aiding Stoke Poges Campus in becoming a well-equipped centre of learning. We can now look forward to developing our Moodle platform under the guidance of Mrs. Caudrelier to enhance the learning opportunities for all students.

Safe-guarding

As part of the safeguarding policy it is important that we can identify all adults onsite to ensure student safety. To this end all Staff and Trustees will have a photograph identity badge so we meet the standard requirements. All visitors entering the building will be asked to wear an ID badge with a RED LANYARD (denoting they are not CRB checked). This includes you as parents and any accompanying siblings over the age of 18. We are mindful of the fact that this may feel strange in the beginning for parents, having been used to accessing the site without this requirement. This is a Safeguarding Policy requirement. Parents' evening and events' days are exempt from this practice as they are deemed to be identified special arrangement days. May I thank you in advance for your co-operation in supporting this new initiative.

Nut Allergy

This year we will be welcoming a student with a severe nut allergy into the school. Please can you remind your sons and daughters that nuts or nut substances e.g. pesto, nut oils **cannot** be brought into school. Some hair and skin products can also contain nuts e.g. cocoa butter. It is important that we keep all our students safe and I thank you for your support in helping keep the school nut free.

Self-Directed Learning - Developments at Stoke Poges

Enhancing student learning

On 23rd and 25th September 'Karim Al-Abbas' from Enlighten Education will be working with our students to help develop the skills required to become an effective 'Self Directed Learner'. Karim is a leading world class memory expert, who works with Schools, Universities and various prestigious clients such as the National Kuwait Banking federation to expand peoples thinking, improve analytical abilities and to become self-starters. I have worked with Karim for nearly 10 years and seen the impact of his teaching on student progress and achievement. The Focus Trust will be sending representatives over the two days to observe these pilot sessions with the a view to rolling it out across other Focus schools over the next year. There is to be a twilight training session for all staff on the 23rd September led by Karim, focusing on the students' experience and effective lesson planning to grow SDL.

Parent Event

There will be an opportunity for parents to meet Karim on Friday the 25th September. At this information event you will be able to learn more about SDL and how to support your children, whilst experiencing some of the

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strategies Karim has shared with both staff and students. More information will follow in next week's Parent update.

School uniform

As you will all be aware, the trust has made a few changes to the school uniform dress code. The directive that immediately affects students here is that girls will be wearing summer dresses and white socks until the Autumn half term. All school blazers now have the school badge on the breast pocket and Year 12 and Year 13 blazers have a braided edge. Students should be carrying the designated school and PE bag. Finally girls have to wear a hat on all school trips. We understand that not all children may have acquired the uniform and this may mean not all students are fully compliant in the first few weeks. However we hope to address this as swiftly as possible. Any queries can be directed to Heather Tucker who will help you in resolving any issues in purchasing the correct clothing.

New Staff

We have several new staff in addition to me and I would like to take a moment to introduce them to you in this edition of parent update:

Bev Birks

Mrs Birks joins us from the Focus School in Pulborough where she taught English Language and Literature across the curriculum and has now stepped into the Regional Head of English role. Mrs Birks was born in Zimbabwe and moved to the UK in her twenties; she still has a passion for travelling, having lived in four countries in her life. Mrs Birks has had two novels published and looks forward in particular to creative writing with her students. She is also the PE coordinator at SPC and is an enthusiast of marathon and triathlon events as well as hockey, where she represented Zimbabwe at under 18 girls' level.



Heather Tucker

Heather joins the school as my Personal Assistant. She has spent many years working in IT, in sales and training roles before moving into Education. Mrs Tucker has several years' experience mentoring and supporting students with Special Educational Needs and latterly was Office Manager in a local primary academy. She is a keen traveller particularly to countries of differing cultures, enjoys cooking and gardening and keeping fit.



John Agyeman – Science & Technology Faculty Leader

Mr Agyeman is a very experienced teacher of Chemistry and Maths both in the state and independent sector and moved into teaching after a spell in industry working in Marketing and Public Relations. He is particularly interested in the relationship between scientific ideas and those in other subjects like History and Economics. Mr Agyeman is a keen sportsman and a seasoned traveller; Morocco, India and Jamaica are recent destinations and in his spare time enjoys reading and researching historical volumes.



Weekly Parent Update

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Week Ending: 4th September 2015

Shameem Akhtar - Humanities Head of Faculty

Ms Akhtar is a Geography specialist, teaching across all Key Stages. She has taught in a wide range of schools from faith to independent schools in the South East. Her hobbies include baking, reading and fitness. Ms Akhtar is currently training for her second half marathon.



Myself – Head teacher

I have worked as a Deputy Head and as a Head of College in two contrasting schools. As a Deputy Head I was part of a team that led a school out of special measures to achieving 'Outstanding' on three consecutive inspections and the school was in the top 5% of schools nationally for Attainment. As Head of College I was fortunate enough to lead my last school from 58% A*-C to 84% A*-C in two years. The school was recognised nationally as one of the most improved schools which was entirely due to the dedication and hard work of both students and staff. I live on a working farm and my hobbies include quilting, baking and skiing, though when skiing I'm more enthusiastic than skilled.

Key Dates for the diary

- Wednesday 7th October 3:00-5:0pm Year 7 and Year 8 Parents' evening
- Thursday 22nd October – Regional Inset Day
- SDL (Self Directed Learning) Student Training – 23rd September 2015
- CAP Student Mentoring Day – 24th September 2015
- Self-Directed Learning Parent Event – 25th September 2015
- UK Senior Maths Challenge – 5th November 2015
- Stoke Poges Motivational Awards Events – 6th November 2015

Wishing you a warm and happy weekend with your family and friends

Sarah Hutt
Headteacher

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SCHOOL