

Parent Update

Focus School Stoke Poges Campus

Week Ending: 25th September 2015

Learning to Learn

This week, we held the 'Accelerated Learning' workshops for our students. Thank you to all of you who were able to attend, I hope you found it purposeful. The school has been buzzing with learning conversations from both staff and students which has been music to my ears. At our next full staff meeting the staff will be developing a variety of activities using the AL strategies, to share with students to



support their learning. I look forward to sharing these with you in a later edition of the parent update. Karim was very complimentary about all our students. He expressed to staff, that he had been to many schools and it is rare he has met a student body that were so engaged, open to learning and eager to succeed. I think this says a lot about the potential of the young people in our care and is a credit to their approach to do well. Below is some of the feedback received from our students to give you a flavour of the day:



YEAR 10 STUDENTS

- An interesting session, lots of tips and techniques to help us to remember. Some were very unusual. The stories were funny and having rooms to put things in actually worked. It will help me in my revision.
- I think it was a great talk and it was very funny and I learnt a lot. Karim was very clever and great fun. My favourite bit was when we started drawing with our non-writing hand.
- I thought the mind maps were very helpful and I can see how they help you to remember information. Your brain remembers 80% of what you do in colour.
- We learnt to always do work in landscape view as you can see more that in portrait and helps you take on information easier.



YEAR 9 STUDENTS

- The use of colour made things easier to read – this will help in lessons.
- We have used mind maps in history today– it makes it so easy to remember and I have learnt more. I can still remember the stories he told us which helps with the periodic table.

YEAR 8 STUDENTS

- I really want to use colour to help me learn my French vocab.
- I think using colour really helps- we use lots in English.
- Everything was good; I would like to hear him speak again.



YEAR 7 STUDENTS

- I remember that Marie Currie was 67 when she died; married Pierre and you can remember her name as Marry curry- and use pictures of a ring and a curry to help.
- Your right brain can remember colour and clapping and your left brain likes lists and words... use both sides together for best memory.
- The story was funny and turned out to be ways to remember countries! It's so easy.

Year 7 & 8 Parents' Consultation Meeting

Year 7 and Year 8's Parents' Consultation Meeting will take place on **Wednesday 7th October between 1.15 and 5.15 pm** (please see the attached letter). We are pleased to be welcoming our Year 7 and Year 8 parents to the first of our parents' consultations.



I am aware from reading parent feedback, from the summer's parent questionnaire that some parents felt concerned about not seeing every member of staff. To this end we will be asking students to make appointments for you, with their teachers next week. Please discuss the appointment form with your son and daughter. I will be running a series of parent workshops on SDL and the future plans for the school. The presentation will be ten minutes with a ten minute question and answer session after each presentation. The presentations will run every half hour and I ask you sign up for one of the presentation slots. There will be 6 in total, so hopefully we will be able to accommodate you all and still ensure you get to meet all the teachers.



House Music

Students are now working towards the house music event to be held at the end of this half term. House Captains have a lead role in organising their Houses and scheduling rehearsals during the working day. Next Wednesday, the school day will be extended until 3.40 pm to facilitate house time and rehearsals. Backing tracks may be used for this purpose providing they do not include lyrics. All lyrics chosen for performance must be approved by school and the Trustees. Once approval has been given, please do support your children in learning the words! You will receive an invitation to the event soon...

Yr. 10 start studying the new 'Higher Project Qualification' (HPQ)

As part of the One School focus on promoting self-directed study, we have introduced the Higher Project Qualification (Level 2) in Year 10 with the view to eventually extending this into the Sixth Form. The HPQ is a student led, teacher guided research project that can be completed in any area of student interest, which is outside of the content studied in the curriculum. Year 10 students have one lesson per week in which skills relating to research and presentation are taught. These skills range from mind-mapping and planning research through to skim reading, note taking and footnoting.



In the next few weeks, students will be expected to narrow their ideas down and develop a research question, which will be written with guidance from Ms Brereton and given official sign off by Mrs Hutt. The skill development, research and writing process is expected to take 18 months, with students completing the project in time for them to begin revision for their GCSE exams.

The end result of the HPQ will be that each student, having undertaken their own personal research, will write an extended answer on their research and give a short presentation explaining their research process and their findings. The long-term aims of the HPQ are that our students will develop and master the skills necessary to complete tasks in the real world – gathering all the facts, deciding what is relevant and useful, interpreting the information in front of them and finally using this to solve problems and reach decisions. During the research and writing phase, students are encouraged to reflect on the process and regular one-to-one meetings with Ms Brereton will be scheduled, to discuss progress and provide guidance when

challenges arise. The fact that each student has selected their own area of interest gives the HPQ student ownership and ensures their personal engagement.

This is an exciting addition to our curriculum and is an excellent opportunity for our students to challenge and stretch themselves and their knowledge.

Year 7 MidYis and Y12 Alis Assessments

What is the purpose of the tests? The MidYis and Alis tests are an assessment of abilities and skills already acquired by each student which will help the teachers identify individual strengths and areas for development and ultimately support the process of teaching and learning. The results will assist in the setting of targets for each student for the forthcoming year and enable teachers to monitor their progress.

What do the assessments consist of? Both assessments are completed online and the main components are vocabulary, maths and non-verbal reasoning.

When will they happen? The Alis Year 12 test will take place on Monday 28th September and the MidYIS Year 7 test will take place on Tuesday 29th September.

Key Dates for the diary

- Extended school day – Wednesday 30th September 2015
- **Wednesday 7th October 3:00-5:0pm Year 7 and Year 8 Parents' evening**
- Extended school day – Thursday 15th October 2015
- Extended school day – Tuesday 20th October
- Thursday 22nd October – Regional Inset Day
- House Music 23rd October 2015
- UK Senior Maths Challenge – 5th November 2015
- Prize giving/ Motivational Awards Event – 6th November 2015
- Tuesday 10th November – Launch of the 'Young Enterprise Challenge'

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

Sarah Hutt
Headteacher

Attachments: Letter re. Parents' Consultation Meeting

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