

Friday 8th September 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

There is a really special feeling around school this week and it has made this particular start of a new school year so brilliant. With the introduction of our new Lower, Middle and Upper Schools and the various changes to the school day and the introduction of our exciting Enrichment Curriculum, it just feels different and very special. Our new Year 9s and Year 10s look great in their blazers. Dressing like the older students and choosing their own GCSE courses is certainly having the desired effect on their levels of maturity and focus. The new Year 7s always look immaculate of course and that is no different this year. They have settled in really well and are gradually getting used to life in The Bridge and their new teachers and learning spaces. It's been a great start and long may that continue.

New members of staff feel no less bewildered than our new students. We are both delighted and excited to welcome them to our School and finally get to work with the young people from our community. You will all get to know them all in good time but for now they are busy getting to know names, school bells, procedures and a thousand other things that make up life as member of staff at Colmers.

In this first letter of the year I normally set out a few basic pieces of information and updates and intend to do the same this year. Please read on to discover some different approaches and news but of course don't forget that [my July newsletter](#), and [all previous letters and newsletters](#), are available on our website as well.

Sixth Form Applications

We welcome our new recruits for sixth form this week but also remind you that **the final day for enrollment is on 30th September 2017**. Each year we welcome back students who, for all sorts of reasons, wish to join our sixth form a little later than others. Like other sixth forms we provide a booster induction to help catch up on those first few weeks they have missed to ensure they know we can all change our mind at times and still be welcomed back.

A level and GCSE Results

I hope you received and read my two letters released on the day of [the A-level results](#) and then [the GCSE results](#) days in August. We remain very proud of our students and the successes they enjoyed, but also those colleagues who worked so hard with them to be successful. But that was last year - the A-level and GCSE results of 2018 are neither guaranteed nor assumed. This is why we will not be wasting any time preparing classes in Year 11 and 13, in particular, for those examinations. **The most valuable advice we can give to those students is that the earlier they commit and engage to the hard slog that is their examination year, the better those results become.** Yes, it's possible to boost the final grade by a few marks in those last few weeks or days, but we saw in 2017 that every student who committed and engaged from Day 1 was truly successful.



HEADTEACHER
Mr Barry Doherty

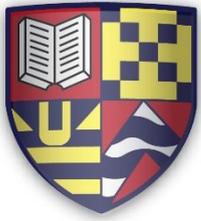
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Learning From Primary Schools – Catch Us On The Gates

We have learned so much about our new Lower School curriculum by visiting and studying the very best practice in the top primary schools in this region. One of the things we realised was missing was that primary school type access to both the Headteacher and Deputy Headteachers on school gates each morning. And so, **from Monday 11th September 2017, either myself, Mr Morris or Mrs Wilks will always be on the gates outside the entrance via the Bristol Road from 8:15am till 8:40am.** Just like in primary school we are there for parents and carers to catch us for a 'quick word' so that we might help solve a problem or look into something for you. We are worried that too many parents and carers are put off by making appointments and 'big meetings in offices' (as one parent described it to me) and so we want to offer that but also this old fashioned way to catch us and know you can speak to us without any delay.

Fabulous Friday Phone Calls

Every Friday every single member of staff will pick two students who have impressed them during the course of the week. And so, if we call, don't panic – we hope it will be to share some really good news that will make you proud. You may even get a few calls in a single week. Over the course of the year we hope that every student will get a call and do our best to spot your children being brilliant and let you know that we know!

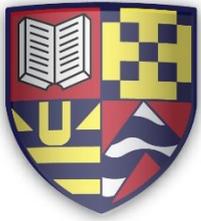
Future Communication

I hope you are all now aware that we are upgrading our communication systems with families. The new Parent Mail system and app will "ping" every time a new school letter or newsletter is ready for you to read. We shall not be printing any more letters home and therefore do our bit to save the environment as well. **Instead you can look forward to a letter from either me or a member of the Senior Leadership Team every Friday afternoon.** Over the course of the four 9-week Seasons we shall take it in turn to write to you, keep you updated and share news stories, successes and photographs of your children at this school. Leading from the front I shall write our Week 1 letter (due next Friday 15th September), and this will then be followed by Mrs Wilks (Deputy Head and Head of Lower School), Mr Morris (Deputy Head and Head of Middle School), Mr Charlett (Assistant Head and Head of Upper School / Sixth Form), Mrs Wilcox (Assistant Head and Lead on Behavioural Inclusion), Mrs Bennett (Assistant Head / SENDCo and Lead on Academic Inclusion), Mrs Finch (Assistant Head and Lead on Social and Emotional Inclusion), Mr Fox and Mr James (Assistant Heads and Leads on Maths and Sciences) and finally, in Week 9, Mr Boardman (Assistant Head and Lead on Enrichment).

Academisation

In my own newsletter to parents and carers next week I intend to share more information regarding the Governing Body's recent decision to consider becoming an academy and joining [The Futures Trust](#). We believe this may have transformational potential for our school and your children's education. We will soon begin to formally explore the possibility of converting to an academy at some point in 2018. This would only happen after a lengthy and detailed consultation process that we are very much looking forward to engaging students and families in throughout. We anticipate that everyone will want to know and understand what academisation means, what are its benefits and what are its risks. **I guarantee that we shall not enter into this process without ensuring you all have those opportunities to ask the questions and receive the answers.** More on this in the coming weeks and months.





Punctuality and Attendance

There will of course be no let up on our goal of improved attendance and punctuality. School gates are locked several minutes ahead of our 8.45am line-ups and we ask parents and carers to help ensure students leave their homes on time to be ready to learn when that bell rings – not shortly afterwards, but on the bell.

On the topic of attendance, the number of students with outstanding attendance or 100% attendance rose again last year, but our overall school attendance remained weak – at just over 93%. Again, please help us build greater resilience within your children's mind-sets and so they can boost their own personal attendance level and that of the school.

Our GCSE results clearly show that those with attendance above 96% almost always maximized their potential. Those with attendance below 94% often did not. They have to be here to be successful and that is why toughening up and getting into school is so important. A student with less than 95% attendance has the equivalent of a day off work every four weeks. Would you employ someone who had that much time off?

Inevitably, there are very occasional days when we are all simply too sick to go to work or school, or we have sudden events in our lives that are even more important than our education or work. That's life and of course that is very different to that need to toughen up and get into school or work. Knowing the difference between the two is the key to good attendance amongst all students in every school. **Typically, too many Colmers students opt for a day on the sofa when they could be in school. Please don't let them.**

Term Dates and School Calendar

Please take a look at our [annual handbook for parents and carers](#). This contains all of the dates, times and contact details we know families seek each year. In the weeks ahead please be advised that we have our annual Open Evening on Thursday 21st September 2017. **School will be closed early on this day, shortly after 2pm**, but we hope to have hundreds of your children returning to take part in the activities and tours that will take place in the evening. Please remember that if you want us to supervise your children until 3:30pm on that day, just let the relevant Head of Year know and we will sort all of that out with you directly.

Thank you for reading and for working with us to give your children the very best start and chances in life. Must dash, I am off to take Year 9 football enrichment with Mr Morris this afternoon.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Doherty,

Headteacher

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