April 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

The summer term has now begun and represents a time of enormous demand and opportunity for our students in Years 11, 12 and 13 in particular. We hope that students in those year groups used their time wisely over the Easter break and have returned feeling that little bit more ready and able to impress those examiners in May and June of this year. Naturally we shall be working closely with those students to ensure they peak at just the right time and manage the various pressures and expectations every student feels at this stage. Please read on for another packed edition with lots of news and updates.

Best wishes, Mr Barry Doherty (Headteacher)

March Trips-Week – Thank you to Students and Colleagues!

With the exception of one group of students who were stuck in the lift at Birmingham Library for a short but nervous period, the trips-week went off without a hitch and again we were delighted with both the range of activities on offer and the responses of the students involved. In order to give you a flavour of the range of activities, here is a summary of the final day, Thursday 24th March: Year 7s and 9s explored social skills with their tutors and HoLAs, Year 8s engaged in issues relating to bullying with Loudmouth. Year 10s had extended time to dig deeper into one of five different GCSE subjects. Year 11s were able to focus on just one subject at length to tackle the most problematic or challenging aspects of the course. Year 12s focussed on either Philosophy & Ethics, History or Maths for the day whilst Year 13s could also dig deeper into either Geography or Psychology. Not to mention the 40 students who were recovering from the trip to Poland – see the final page for more on the visit. As I said to the assembled students and colleagues on the last day of the Spring Term, I am grateful to Colmers staff who continually buck the national trend and freely organise school trips and activities - and to the students who engage in the activities with such enthusiasm.

Government Education Proposals – “Educational Excellence Everywhere”

In his budget speech on 16th March, George Osbourn (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) surprised many of us with various announcements regarding the future of education in England. Nicky Morgan, Education Secretary, then published the government’s white paper proposals in more depth the following day and enabled us to look at the details within their “Educational Excellence Everywhere” proposals. The document sets out ways that the government hope to tackle the shortage of teachers and school leaders in this country. In addition there was detail on greater freedom for schools to design their own curriculum, including funding for a quarter of all schools to extend their school day. Further information about how schools are held to account by parents and the public were clarified alongside
goals for how schools would be funded in the future. The headlines tended to focus on the government’s intention for all schools to become academies by 2020.

There is much to be excited and nervous about academisation and of course there will inevitably be a number of concerns from families and colleagues. In the coming months and years I shall keep everyone informed of how these changes will affect Colmers and at the appropriate time will arrange numerous opportunities to meet with myself and the Governing Body if and when the transition to an academy begins. Whatever happens, Colmers’ name will not change, we shall always be a school and I shall never become a principal. The comparisons with Principal Skinner are too risky. In the meantime, please contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns. The academy programme is important but must not and will not distract us from the more pressing issue of your son or daughter’s education and success.

**Sainsbury’s Active Kids Vouchers – The More the Merrier!**

Should you shop in Sainsbury’s please look out for and ask for their Active Kids Vouchers. These provide the school with valuable opportunities to purchase school equipment and enable us to replace expensive items during a time of growing austerity in education.

**Parent Governors – do you wish to serve your community?**

We currently have two Parent Governor vacancies on the Governing Body here at Colmers School. Experience of school governance is not needed and full training is provided. All you need is an interest in education and a desire to support the community. If you feel that this role is something you would be interested in please contact Miss Shortland, Clerk to the Governing Body, on 453 1778 who will be pleased to give you further information.

**School Day Consultation – Extended Days Have Now Begun…**

Following the period of consultation, the Governing Body have formally approved the extension of the school day from 11th April 2016. This means that the school day will be extended by 90 minutes, Monday to Thursday. Whilst the coming years will undoubtedly witness an extension of the school day across all schools nationally, we have begun where we know a weakness exists. This is why our provision will only apply to 80-90 students in Years 9 and 10 who have struggled with the completion of successful homework. Obviously, we only wish to support students whose homework is a concern to us all and therefore all students are urged to ensure that they put more time, effort and energy into producing first class homework: tasks, revision, research, wider reading and assessment preparation.

**New Catering Contract Underway – A Even Better Deal for Students!**

We are pleased to inform parents and carers that following a competitive tendering process we have renewed our contract with Chartwells Catering for three years for the provision of meals at breakfast, break time and lunch time. Whilst at first sight this may not sound like particularly exciting information, it is in fact great news for your children and this school…

The new contract represents an improved deal for the school and families, with all fresh produce now locally sourced along with improved value for money across almost all menu items. Also, from 11th April 2016, a number of 55p morning break offers will be made available within the menu and will be based on a choice of either hot or cold food as well as each lunchtime a number of 99p hot and cold offers including sandwiches and baguettes. Further to this, there will be a significant financial investment into our kitchen facilities and serving points during the summer holiday to enhance the overall experience for students at Colmers. We encourage all students to have a healthy meal at lunchtime and try out the new improved value menu and offers after the Easter break.

My thanks goes to Mr Tranter (School Business Manager), Mr McHale (Chair of Governors), Mr Phelps (Parent Governor) and Mr Smith (Parent Governor) in overseeing the tender and selection process so carefully on behalf of families.

**Example pricing under the new contract will be:**

- All Meal Deals £1.75
- Main Meal £1.00
- Main and Potato £1.30
- Main and Vegetable / Salad £1.30
- Main, Potato and Vegetables / Salad £1.50
- Pizza Slice 85p
- Chips 80p
- Sandwich 99p
- Baguette £1.25
- All fresh ‘whole’ fruit is to be sold at cost price

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**Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together & Challenging Mind-sets**
Achieving Excellence

The UK Maths Challenge – Major Breakthrough!

This academic year (2015/16), Colmers School & Sixth Form College have seen a major increase in the number of pupils participating in the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust (UKMT) Maths Challenge. We have so far entered into two maths competitions. They are the Intermediate Maths Challenge (IMC) and the Senior Maths Challenge (SMC).

Congratulations in particular go to Ross Williams (10JT) who achieved the “Best in School” and “Best in Year 10” with a whopping 81 points! Our congratulations also extend to Dean Styles (10SW), Daniel Jones (10JT) and Andy La (9SDS). All four of these students qualified for the follow-up European Kangaroo Mathematical Challenge competition.

And the success does not stop there. In total, twelve certificates were awarded – three gold, three silver and six bronze! Certificates are awarded to the top 40% of pupils out of a total of around 200,000 in the UK. The successful Gold student were Ross Williams (10JT), Dean Styles (10SW) and Daniel Jones (10JT). Silver winners included Andy La (9SDS), Jake Conlon (9TBF) and Patrick Doherty (9EA). Bronze winners were Caitlin Tooke (10CL), Milly Ridd (9GG), Jay Merchant (9KG), Jake Fowke (9EA), Jennifer Parsons (9EA) and Rebecca Timmington (9KG)

My personal thanks goes to Mr Man for organising, motivating and supporting the programme. His enthusiasm for the competition is infectious!

Belonging Together

The 2nd Scorecard Is Out – How does your son or daughter’s score compare?

Every student has now received their second scorecard of the year. The scorecard simply and clearly sets out how they performed in each of the ten events. Did they achieve a bronze, silver or a gold in each event? What was their overall medal and what was their overall score? We urge all parents and carers to compare their score with their score from the first trimester. Is it higher or lower? Why? Please remember, those events capture the skills every student needs to master in order to be successful in all aspects of their life and they do not reflect anything other than their attitude to life and to learning. But, for comparison’s sake, please refer to the table on the left so that you can see how each year group and house performed...

Last time (December 2015), there were three students who managed to reach the astonishing heights of 100 points. This time we had nine students and shows how the scorecard is enabling students to pin-point their weakness and develop new strengths. Congratulations therefore goes to Daisy Drennan, Sadie Guise, Alice Lloyd, Greg Maglione, Kirsty Malkin, Abbie Martin, Danielle Murphy, Annalise Stevens and Jamie Waters. Each student scored 100 out of a possible 100. Amazing young people!

Below, you can see the names of the three students who came top of our first scorecard competition. Their final rank had to come down to how many House Points they had accumulated and so each one of them can be extremely proud indeed!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>62 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>58 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>53 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>54 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>53 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Form</td>
<td>62 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolphins</td>
<td>57 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagles</td>
<td>59 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolves</td>
<td>58 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>58 Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Scorecard Points</th>
<th>House Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Jamie Waters in Year 7 and Eagle House</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Annalise Stevens in Year 8 and Dolphin House</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Abbie Martin in Year 8 and Dolphin House</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together & Challenging Mind-sets
CHALLENGING MIND-SETS

Visit to Poland - 20th to 23rd March 2016

It has been hard for us all to identify what we feel able to say about our experiences in Poland. We knew we were going to visit the scene of the greatest crime against humanity in history, but we also knew that nothing could fully prepare us for what we would see, hear, read and feel. And so, below, is a factual summary of what we did and where we went. It is accompanied by a quotation we read in Auschwitz itself, which sums up why we went and why we need to visit the scenes of such crimes. Finally, some questions that we asked ourselves during our visit. In keeping with the some of the guidance we found, there are no accompanying images, just an invitation to speak to all who went – we can be identified by the pin badge of the UK and Polish flag that we shall wear for the next 12 months.

Day 1 - Sunday 20th March 2016: The group of 40 students (from Years 8 to 13) and eight staff met at noon in West car park. We headed down to Birmingham International Airport before flying off to Krakow in Poland; our destination for the next three days.

- Is it right for us to visit a place of such horrors?
- What should be our role and purpose on behalf of Colmers community?

Day 2 - Monday 21st March 2016: A two-hour coach journey from the hotel took us to Auschwitz where we took part in a guided tour of the largely untouched buildings and facilities of this prison-camp. In the afternoon we met up with our guide once more and were taken around the nearby death camp at Birkenau. We visited surviving buildings that were used to imprison victims in the days or weeks before their extermination in the gas chambers and crematoria.

- Was the Holocaust planned from the beginning?
- How did human beings treat other human beings so horribly?
- Could this ever happen again?
- Where was God?

Day 3 - Tuesday 22nd March 2016: A different kind of day began with a personal tour of the incredible Wieliczka salt mines. It was a welcome respite from the deep sadness and introspection of the previous day. In the afternoon we journeyed back into central Krakow and visited the famous Oscar Schindler factory and museum. Google maps ensured our long walk back to the hotel was uneventful but memorable.

- How much suffering did salt mine workers endure and how did this compare?
- What made Oscar Schindler decide to risk everything to help Jews?
- If a building or place could talk, what would it say?

Day 4 - Wednesday 23rd March 2016: Another walk from the hotel took us to the Galicia Museum to study a new collection of photographs that explore surviving evidence of Jewish life in pre-war Poland. This culminated in meeting an elderly Polish lady whose family hid and protected a young Jewish girl during the war. Our thoughts began to turn to home as we walked back to our hotel, through the old and beautiful city centre of Krakow. Time was well used by all to sample local food and purchase gifts for family and friends.

- What makes some people brave and others cowards?
- What would I have done during the war?
- Did the suffering of the Polish people end when the Nazis were defeated or did it carry on for many years?

DATES for YOUR DIARY...

- Wednesday 13th April – 2nd Trimester Personal Scorecards Released to Students!
- Wednesday 20th April - Monitoring Meetings, 2pm to 7pm – ALL year groups!
- Monday 30th May to Friday 4th June - Whitsun Half Term
- Friday 22nd July at 2pm - Final Day of the Summer Term – Summer Holidays begin!