July 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

The examination desks are now tidied away for another year and our Year 11s and Year 13s are finally able to get some proper sleep and relaxation back into their lives. Whatever the outcome of their efforts and ours, we are really proud of our students this year. The exams were tougher than ever and the sheer number they had to take left many feeling numb at times, but they came through it and made us very proud. However, as they sleep, party or binge-watch Netflix and Amazon Prime, we remain busy here at Colmers and the final newsletter of the year will, I hope, capture some of the endeavour and excitement of the final weeks of term – and some news and dates for next year!

In the meantime have a wonderful summer break!

Best wishes,
Mr Barry Doherty (Headteacher)

Senior Prefects Announced – Congratulations!

We are proud to announce that Mollie Jones and Jack Colley were selected to be our Head Girl and Head Boy for 2017/18. They will be supported, as Deputies, by Leah Linton and Chris Finch, and also the other seven Senior Prefects: Anna Williams, Leah Simpkin, Lewis O’Donaghe, Mollie Clisset, Sophie Phelps, Elissa Crisp and Esther Olunmi. The process for selection was extended this year and was made much more rigorous and demanding. For example, each applicant had to come up with a school improvement idea and we were delighted with the suggestions that came up and six of them will appear in our next school improvement plan. This means that those students will have the pleasure of reporting back to the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body in the coming 12 months. Their ideas were wonderful – not the typical “we want a four-day week” or “free chips for all” – but ways to create an even more compassionate environment for students struggling with exam nerves or other day-to-day worries that most young people have. More on this next year but for now well done to them all and a big thank you to Mrs Sarah Finch, Assistant Headteacher, for organising the process and ensuring we all got to the right places on time.

Farewell to Colleagues – Colmers Assemble!

It is that time of year when we say goodbye to some of our teaching and associate staff. Mrs Choudry (Head of Computer Science) and Mrs Webb (Science Technician) have already departed and will be joined by Mrs Read (Teaching Assistant), Mr Butter (Adolescent Psychotherapist), Ms Boles (Pastoral Manager) and Mr Finch (Cover Supervisor). Leaving the Maths Department will be Mr Strong, Ms Buckley and Mr Ashton, whilst Miss Weaver and Miss Walls will be leaving their roles in the Science Department. In Performing Arts, Mrs Meredith and Mr Young will begin new adventures from September, whilst Mrs Moloney (SENDCo) and Mrs Evans (Head of Geography) will also be starting in new schools in September. On behalf of the Governing Body I wish to publically thank and acknowledge these colleagues who have devoted so much time, energy, commitment and passion for the students at Colmers!
There’s one certainty about life and that is nothing ever stays the same. Whilst the departure of great staff is a headache it is also an opportunity to take stock and try to go out and recruit the very, very best staff out there today. In that respect we have been incredibly busy and we are absolutely delighted with the superb appointments that we have made. They are appointments that will help us deliver the improvements that we now seek at Colmers and people who will rapidly become the life and soul of this school going forward.

The biggest transformation will take place in Mathematics. Mr Fox (Assistant Headteacher and Head of Maths) welcomes seven new teachers. All are vastly experienced, leaders in their field, and come with very high ambitions and expectations. Coming to us from the Primary Phase will be Mrs Brennan, Miss Orton and Mr Watkin – they will be transforming our Lower School Maths curriculum (Years 7 and 8) and ensuring that our students are better prepared for the rising demands of the GCSE Maths course.

GCSE and A-level specialists are also coming to us in September and they include Mrs Muldowney, Mr A. Williams, Mr R. Williams and Mr Pratt. This is a formidable team and causes us to be very, very excited about the additional expertise we have in such an important department in our school.

Elsewhere, following Miss Boles’ departure and Miss Ricketts’ full-time move into her teaching role, we appointed two brand new Pastoral Support Workers: Ms Cooke and Ms Williams. They will be working directly with Mrs Wilcox to ensure students behave themselves and that incidents of poor behaviour are investigated and challenged – but also support young people when they make poor decisions. In addition, we shall also appoint a new Attendance Officer for September. He or she will become more acquainted with families whose children have attendance that causes us major concerns (less than 90%) and find ways to get attendance back on track and avoid life-chances being eroded. They will work closely with Mr Mark Jones (a name and person many at Colmers will be familiar with) who returns to us as our Director of School Outreach. Combined with our two new Heads of Year (Mr Bradley (Y9) and Mr Ramsey (Y10) – both Teachers of PE), there will be a fresh look and feel to our pastoral teams from September. More on that from Mrs Wilcox in September.

In Science, we welcome Mrs Smallwood to replace Miss Weaver and to cover Mrs Gladstone during her maternity leave. Congratulations to Miss Clarke who was promoted from her role as the Head of Year 8 to the Head of Geography. This was a really tough decision for her and reflected her affection for the pastoral and academic growth of young people.

Finally, I wish to congratulate two colleagues who were promoted on to the Senior Leadership Team in recent weeks. Firstly, Mrs Bennett - who many of you will know as a brilliant teacher of Drama and Head of Year. She now becomes Assistant Headteacher and SENDCo, replacing my colleague Mrs Moloney.

Finally, I also wish to congratulate Mrs Wilks, who was appointed Deputy Headteacher recently. She will be taking a lead role in The Bridge and Lower School, whilst retaining her oversight of the excellent English Department.

With the formation of The Bridge and the new Lower School curriculum, its feels a particularly exciting time for us at Colmers and I firmly believe that we have assembled the strongest ever group of staff at Colmers.

**Year 11 Graduation Assembly – And Sixth Form Induction Day!**

We no longer have a Leavers’ Assembly in Year 11. This is because so many now stay for a further two years to complete their A-level studies. This is why we now have a ‘Graduation Assembly’ instead. But it’s still the same wonderful morning – a chance for our Year 11s to turn up in their finest and listen to a range of very kind, very moving and often very silly speeches. Most of them still looked exhausted but they can at least settle into a three month summer holiday to recuperate.

It was superbly organised by Mr Bennett and we settled into the traditional daft staff music video created by Mrs Snell over many weeks and after many edits. Hopefully, you will find the time to take a look on YouTube. Just search “Colmers School Staff Farewell Tribute to Year 11 ‘Class of 2017’” or click here if you are reading this on-line or you are Harry Potter.
The Year 11 Prom – Thursday 29th June 2017

Amazing night! The students looked great and danced from the very first song (sorry, don’t know what it was but it sounded very fresh and modern) right up to the last and best song of the night – The Killer’s Mr Brightside. They deserved every minute of the fuss their families and Colmers made of them. A great bunch of students and we felt this was the best ever prom in terms of their affection for one another and the obvious fun they were having all night long. Needless to say perhaps, but our students behaved impeccably and drew compliments from the hotel management and from their guests – who looked a little nervous at first! Mr Boardman and Ian Wilson (from Imaginary Friends Photography) became Chief Photographers for the night and ensured that we provided affordable and professional photos for the students to help them remember a wonderful night and a bit of a thank you from us all. A huge thank you to Mr Boardman, Ian Wilson and Mr Bennett for organising a terrific event.
Barcelona Visit – Thursday 6th to Sunday 10th July 2017

Each year we’ve organised a major school trip to somewhere of huge significance. Mrs Hodgson organised a trip to the First World War battlefields two years ago, whilst Mrs Hewston took students to Poland and Auschwitz just over a year ago. Mrs Lewis and Mr Warner considered all sorts of places in Europe and chose Barcelona so that students could have a new experience to taste the cultural highlights of one of the world’s most famous cities – home of the 1992 Olympic Games (remember, they beat Birmingham’s bid?) and of course Barcelona FC.

At 3am, on Thursday 6th July, the coach left Colmers and the flight from Birmingham International left on time with all baggage and travellers safely on board. Once in Barcelona the students and staff dumped their bags in the hostel and immediately set out on the first of a few walking tours that centred around the incredible Sagrada Família – the cathedral of the Holy Family.

Building of this truly unique cathedral began in the 1880s and is set to be completed by 2025. Despite many miles of walking most of the group were up for a night walk to Nou Camp – the home of Barcelona FC. We thought we saw Lionel Messi but it may have been Mr Bennett.

On Day 2, Friday, a luxury coach took the group to Parc Güell and explored Gaudi’s weird and wonderful vision for a magical suburban paradise. Lunch consumed and many photos taken, the coach then took the group through the centre of Barcelona so that the afternoon could be spent at the aquarium and then on the beach, enjoying the high temperatures, blue skies, golden sand and crashing waves. Even after all of this, the entire group was up for yet more night walks and visited the Magic Fountain to watch a water and light show to music. Most got soaked and will probably never forget that beautiful evening together.

Saturday, Day 3, was a long day. An early start saw the group walk along the Avenue Diagonal to the Picasso Museum, via the old Gothic Cathedral. Then, after lunch, through La Ramblas and an hour or so in the world-famous La Boqueria market. Fortunately, there were no night walks proposed and instead a quiz night was organised and enabled the students and staff to catch their breath and relax before the final day.

Sunday, Day 4, started a little later than anticipated but the planned walk via the old bull fighting arena and Art Museum to the Olympic Village and Museum were successful despite the sadness that our adventure was coming to an end.

These kind of trips are getting rarer in the UK these days. Many staff simply don’t want to or feel able to organise such visits. Planning a family holiday is one thing, but a school family of thirty nine children and six staff is another. And so, I wish to thank again Mrs Lewis and Mr Warner for their brilliant organisational powers. But also for cheerfully and enthusiastically taking those children, myself, Mrs Fowke, Mrs Meredith and Mr Shortland on what turned out to be a truly memorable visit with the best students you could imagine. Where next?
Year 6 into 7 Induction Week – Born on the 4th of July

As you will be aware we decided to introduce a four-day induction week this year – instead of the usual one day. We did this because we wanted to make sure that we all got to know each other properly and to massively reduce the anxiety many new students feel all over the summer holidays as they try to imagine what coming to a secondary school will be like.

We ensured they had a taste of all the new subjects they will be studying and rounded the week off with some treats with families. They are going to be a great new members of the Colmers family and will of course be our very first recruits to The Bridge. Time will fly between now and when we see them graduate from our Upper School (Sixth Form) in the summer of 2024.

Email from a Year 6 Parent…

“I would just like to say that my son has had an amazing week. I was really worried as we had tears Monday night. He didn’t think he’d make friends or cope with ‘big school’. But I think having four days has made all the difference. He has made lots of friends and just had a fabulous time. He is really looking forward to September now and has come home every night full of his exciting day’s events. I have spoken to many parents and they have all said the same so expect a lot of emails like this one! It was a wonderful idea to have it over four days and to top it off with a BBQ really finished the week on a high. I feel he will be pushed to his full potential and I know he will love enrichment.”
Panathlon Challenge – A Report from Amy Allsop, Year 12 Sports Leader

On Wednesday 5th July, Colmers hosted their first ever “Panathlon Challenge” - working alongside the Panathlon Team. In total, 80 students and 20 members of staff from Cherry Oak School and Victoria School & Specialist Art College competed in eight multi-skills activities such as New Age Kurling, Boccia, Bean Bag Throw, Football and Kwik Cricket. Year 12 students, working towards their Level 3 Community Sport Leader Award, and Year 11 Sports Leaders ably and enthusiastically ran all of the events; the Panathlon Team and school staff all commented on everyone’s commitment and enthusiasm for the event. We ended the day with an awards ceremony where the winners, Cherry Oak School, were presented with the Panathlon Challenge Trophy. Everyone received a medal and certificate for their fantastic efforts. It was a fun and exciting day that hopefully created some lasting memories for all involved.

End of Year Trips and Activities Week

Mr James (AHT and Head of Science) helped put together our huge trips and visits programme in the final week of term. At the time of going to print we have either already enjoyed or about to enjoy a Science Challenge Day, Barclay Card Life-Skills Day, cinema trips and Star Wars Literacy Days or visits to North Wales, the Liverpool Slavery Museum, Twycross Zoo, West Midlands Safari Park, local cinema, Rush Park and Thorpe Park.

A big thank you again to my colleagues who have been planning these additional experiences for many months so that the end of the school year can end with so much fun and excitement.
The Bridge – 47 Days to Lift-Off

What began as an idea in October, a vision in December, a consultation in March and a plan by May, we now have about 47 days before the first students arrive in The Bridge. As outlined earlier this year, our new recruits will be arriving through their own entrance in West and will have the majority (but not all) of their lessons in the West Building.

The curriculum is written, the staff are in place, the entrance will look amazing (wait and see!) and the classrooms and learning spaces will be getting a face-lift in time for Wednesday 6th September. The main headache has been a really nice problem. We thought that West Building would be home to The Bridge for two or three years, but it’s not. Please read on to learn more exciting news about our school.

The New Build – Multi-Million Pound Investment on its Way to Colmers

You will be aware that we were successful, several years ago, in our bid to refurbish or replace the West Building. We thought this would all take place in 2019 or 2020 but we have been pleasantly surprised by how quickly things are now moving. Just over a month ago we were asked by the Education Funding Agency to begin a series of complex meetings with them to discuss our ‘school-specific brief’ and begin forming ideas about where this new building would be located and what it might look like.

Whilst we now know that the building will be replaced (and not refurbished) we don’t yet know where the building will be situated or what it will look like. We are seeking a brick-built structure that will blend into the rest of the school buildings. The West Building will stay in place throughout the construction itself and therefore the disruption to the life of the school is likely to be minimised.

We’ve been asked to look at other schools who have recently enjoyed new builds. We had a look around Turves Green Boys’ School’s fabulous new building (see above right) and, more recently, the ARK Kings Academy (see lower right).

Naturally, we shall keep you informed about these developments but we expect a lot of news in September and October. It is realistic to expect cranes and diggers on our site within 12 months but the biggest piece of advice we keep receiving from other schools is that it’s never plain sailing and expect lots of hiccups and surprises along the way!


For the third year running we have put together our handbook for parents and carers. It’s just a single A4 folded booklet with everything you need to know about the school year ahead: term dates, parents’ and carers’ evenings, contact emails etc.

The latest version is now ready and can be obtained via the school website, or by clicking here.

Paper copies of the booklet are also available on both reception desks. It’s perfect to stick on the fridge!
Annual School Sports Day – Friday 14th July 2017

Our annual event went off without a hitch thanks to the meticulous planning and organisation of Mr Wilcox (Head of PE) and his team. In the end the weather was kind (not too hot and the odd break of sunshine but no rain!) and so the morning was really busy and active with plenty of distractions like Mr Young’s disk jockeying and Mr Fox’s commentary. Spontaneous mass dancing also entertained us all, despite having to listen to songs like The Macarena and Gangnam Style.

Mrs Snell also managed to dance in a full wolf costume for 3½ hours to gee up her house. Mr Wilcox has provided the following report (opposite) on the day itself and gives some insight into what was a great day for students and has become a traditional mark of the end of the formal school year.

Whilst the result of the 2016/17 House Competition will not be revealed until the very last day of term, we can reveal that Eagle House won Sports Day, Wolf came second and the bronze medal went to Dolphins.
New Assessment and Reporting policy for families – keeping you informed

Assessment and reporting is constantly changing. Sometimes that is at a national level with GCSE grading moving from letters to numbers and sometimes we try to refine things to make parents and carers as informed as they can be. This year we have had an enormous amount of success moving to our seasonal approach and we are expecting the new changes we have planned to have as much of a positive impact.

In Lower School we have focused on literacy. Our Heads of Department and our pupils have constantly told us that, if you are to be successful in your GCSEs and A-levels, you need high literacy levels. Therefore, when we report to you, there will be a focus on this area. Instead of grades, you will see the language of ‘acquiring’, ‘developing’ and ‘mastering’. We know that this is language that many of you will be familiar with from your child’s primary education.

In Middle School there will be little change. You will still see a report that is broken down into the individual subjects. However, instead of a table, you will see a ‘flight path’ that will clearly highlight if your child is on track.

In Sixth Form the changes are minimal and you will see all the information that you have seen in previous years. However, there are one or two additions that will make the information more accessible than in the past.

We have also looked to simplify some of the information that you get and avoid the need to read codes and transfer information from one place to next. For example, going forward you will be given a simple answer on behaviour – does your son/daughter behave? Yes or No. Do they participate in Physical Education? Yes or No.

In addition to the changes to the reports you receive, we have listened carefully to your feedback on Parents’ and Carers’ evenings. Therefore, we are reintroducing subject-teacher meetings; giving the opportunity to support your child’s learning as much as possible. These will look slightly different in Lower School, but more on that next year.

In summary, you will receive four times a year...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower School (Year 7 and 8):</th>
<th>Middle and Upper School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Acquiring, developing or mastering statements in English, Mathematics, French and Literacy</td>
<td>• Working At Grades (WAGs) in their GCSE and A-level subjects. These will be placed on a flight path. More on this next year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An Attitude to Learning grade (A to D)</td>
<td>• An Attitude to Learning grade (A to D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An Attitude to Homework grade (A to D)</td>
<td>• An Attitude to Homework grade (A to D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A behaviour judgment (Yes or No)</td>
<td>• A behaviour judgment (Yes or No) – Middle School only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A PE participation judgment (Yes or No)</td>
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If you have any questions regarding the new reports or anything related to targets and parents’ and carers’ evenings then please do not hesitate to contact Mr Morris, Deputy Headteacher, on smorris@colmers.school.
Belonging Together

New Diary and Expectations for all Students

We have said many times that your child’s education relies on a close partnership between the student, the home and the school. In recent years we do not feel the homework diary has been successful in forging that alliance. Too many students lose or forget their diaries and too many parents and carers have rightly questioned the value and impact of the diary and the need to sign it every week. We have, as tutors, also been too inconsistent in how we treat those diaries and ensure they are the basis of communication about the week to week progress of your children. That’s why you will see some major changes.

Firstly your children will be issued with new A4 size homework diaries in September. There will be more space for them to record things and there will be a QR Code for you and them to hyperlink to all the important documents you seek from time to time. However, the biggest changes will be on the expectations placed on every student, every parent/carer and every tutor to communicate with one another each week. Below is a summary of those expectations:

Students’ Routines:
✓ Complete the homework set in every subject or record “none set” with a reason if homework has not been set by their teacher.
✓ Every weekend complete a review of the week and summarise how many house points have been awarded, along with working out their attendance and punctuality score for the week.
✓ They will also be required to identify any breaches of uniform, appearance or equipment expectations
✓ There will be a space in the diary to record detentions set by members of staff, rather than the slower and much more expensive letters home.
✓ A student must go to school on a Monday morning with their diary signed and the previous week evaluated.

Families’ Routines:
✓ Please check that your son or daughter has filled in their diary and talk to them about the homework they have been set.
✓ Please confirm that they have been reading for pleasure on at least four nights per week (with a tick or cross)
✓ Please confirm that they have sat down to complete homework on at least four nights per week.
✓ A space remains for your signature and a space to communicate with their tutor if there is a problem that needs to be looked into or sorted out.

Tutors’ Routines:
✓ They will be checking and signing your children’s diary every Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday – they will look at about eight diaries in registration during each of those morning times.
✓ Tutors will be checking to see if homework has been set and recorded and that your son or daughter has completed their self-evaluation – and that that you are involved as well of course.
✓ Tutors will also give weekly judgments on your children’s uniform, appearance and equipment and let you know how many House Points they have awarded them for their behaviour, attendance, punctuality or overall attitude to school life.
✓ There will certainly be a cranking-up of expectations all round, but only to ensure your children’s progress and engagement are more carefully monitored and we take much earlier action when things aren’t going so well.
**NEW COLMERS’ ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME**

You will be aware that one of the most exciting features of our curriculum review was the introduction of an Enrichment Programme for our younger students. This will take place four afternoons per week in Years 7 and 8 and two afternoons per week in Year 9. In recent weeks the students were given a brochure with all of the Enrichment options and they asked to select their first, second and third preferences on each of their two or four days of activities.

We have a few eye-catching partners join our programme and this is something that we shall be trying very, very hard to expand in the coming years. However, setting sail on this enrichment journey with two world famous partners – The Rep and Aston Villa FC – isn’t a bad start at all and has got the actors and footballers in our school dreaming of bigger stages already.

The Enrichment Programme has been created to help your children fall in love with new things. We want them to try out new skills and experiences and to discover an affection for new ideas and activities that they didn’t even know they enjoyed. In other words, we want to ensure their life at Colmers opens their eyes to the billions of exciting things they might learn or do in life. We believe this will make them happier, more enthusiastic and more engaged young people.

If you have any questions about the programme or activities, or if you know of someone who may be able to support our programme and provide small or large groups of students with new experiences, then please contact our Enrichment Programme lead, Mr Boardman (Assistant Headteacher), on c.boardman@colmers.school.

On the left is a word cloud of the various activities we have got lined-up for your children - exciting times!
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

Please see the remaining key events of this academic year and then, below, the dates for the next school year.

THIS YEAR:
- Friday 21st July 2017 at 1pm: Final day of the Summer Term (1pm finish)
- Thursday 17th August: A-level Result Day (9.30am onwards in the Sixth Form Centre)
- Thursday 24th August: GCSE Results Day (8.00am onwards in the Sixth Form Centre for Year 13s, but 10.30am onwards for Year 12s)

NEXT YEAR:

Part A: THE TERM DATES:
- Term 1: Wednesday 6th September to Friday 20th October 2017
- Term 2: Monday 30th October to Friday 22nd December 2017 at Midday
- Term 3: Monday 8th January to Friday 16th February 2018
- Term 4: Monday 26th February to Thursday 29th March 2018
- Term 5: Monday 16th April to Friday 25th May 2018
- Term 6: Monday 4th June to Friday 20th July 2018 at Midday.

Part B: THE INSET DAYS:
- Monday 4th September 2017
- Tuesday 5th September 2017
- Friday 1st December 2017
- Monday 23rd July 2018
- Tuesday 24th July 2018

Part C: THE BANK HOLIDAYS:
- Friday 30th March 2018 – Good Friday
- Monday 7th May 2018 – May Bank Holiday

Reminder – Next Year’s School Day Timings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 7 and 8 Daily Timetable</th>
<th>Years 9 to 13 Daily Timetable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45am Registration and Tutorial</td>
<td>8.45am Registration and Tutorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00am Lesson 1</td>
<td>9.00am Lesson 1</td>
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<td>10.00am Lesson 2</td>
<td>10.00am Lesson 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00am First Break (30 mins)</td>
<td>11.00am First Break (30 mins)</td>
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<td>11.30am Lesson 3</td>
<td>11.30am Lesson 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30pm Lunch Break (30 mins)</td>
<td>12.30pm Lesson 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.00pm Lesson 4</td>
<td>1.30pm Lunch Break (30 mins)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.00pm Lesson 5 - Enrichment Session</td>
<td>2.00pm Lesson 5 – GCSEs and A-levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.30pm End of School</td>
<td>3.30pm End of School</td>
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</table>

REMEMBER... SCHOOL CLOSES FOR ALL STUDENTS AT 2PM ON A WEDNESDAY.