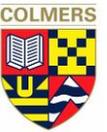


# HEADTEACHER'S HALF-TERMLY NEWSLETTER



May 2012

Dear Parents and Carers,

## *Colmers Jubilee Day – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June...*

Firstly... we hope that this Friday's Jubilee Day celebrations will be as memorable as we hope with many activities and novelties arranged for your sons and daughters to enjoy and remember. Much more on this in the final *Fanfare* and my next newsletter.

## *Sixth Form announcement*

By now I hope that all families are aware that we were successful in our application to introduce sixth form provision here at Colmers, from September 2013. We were glad to receive the full support of neighbouring education providers and, ultimately, Birmingham City Council. Consequently, we have already begun preparations to ensure we are ready to open our doors to sixth form students and the first major decisions on this will be shared in the final newsletter of the academic year.

## *Site development*

A series of works have now commenced that will have a significant impact on the appearance and the safety of our site. In the coming weeks you will notice a facelift for West Building, including the re-marking of the car parks, dropping-off bays and one way system. In addition, a new pathway will be built to separate and improve the safety of students as they walk into the West Building car park from the A38. This will ensure that pedestrians do not move amongst parking or moving cars and further improve our site safety. Improved signage and directions will also be put in place to help all our visitors.

By September additional outdoor seating and dining facilities will be open and ready for students to use, particularly the new covered Library Café; which will be completed over the summer holiday to avoid disruption or danger to students. Added to this will be a painting and decorating programme in West Building to ensure our site remains as attractive and inviting as it has always been.

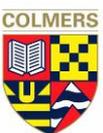
## *Parents' survey*

Just after half term, Mr Boardman (Assistant Headteacher) will be contacting parents to seek your completion of our annual survey. Typically, the return rate of Colmers parents and carers is exceptional and we hope to continue receiving your support in completing and returning those invaluable surveys this year.

## *Staffing updates...*

Whilst the main comings and goings are summarised in the final edition of my newsletter, I wanted to draw your attention to the internal appointments of Miss Murray and Mr Love to the posts of Assistant Subject Leaders in RE and History, respectively. Furthermore, Miss Bryan has been promoted to joint Deputy Subject Leader for Mathematics.

Parents and carers will be aware of the central importance of high literacy and numeracy skills in both modern education and the modern workplace. With this in mind and with our intention to further increase progress and attainment in both English and Mathematics, we advertised and appointed assistant headteachers for these areas. From September, Mr Fox will join us from his current school in Worcestershire, as Assistant Headteacher for Numeracy and Mathematics. Mr Morris, our very own Subject Leader for English, has been promoted to Assistant Headteacher for Literacy and English. Congratulations to both colleagues; both of whom, I am confident, will further enhance your children's education and life chances.



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE BY BELONGING TOGETHER & CHALLENGING MIND-SETS



## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

### *Prefects*



It is the time in the year to say good bye and thank you to our out-going Year 11 prefects and in particular to our first two Head Prefects, Rebecca Buckley and Shakeira Anderson-Roscoe – and to their team of Senior Prefects: Safiya Gordon, Annalise Cowan, Bethany Green, Ciaran Vaughan, William Oakes and Shaquille Moseley.

The selection of our new prefects (from current Year 10s) has been completed in recent days. I am pleased to announce that Sharnna Gilsean and Jacob Marshall were selected as our Head Prefects – again joined by a team of Senior Prefects: Gurpreet Ballagun, James Brunt, Jade Darby, Chloe Farrall, Holiday Fisher and Sophia Taylor.

In total 80 students in Year 10 have become prefects. Applications were open to all students and the selection process involved the analysis of application forms and interviews, alongside a study of each applicant's attendance, punctuality, uniform and behaviour data. Commiserations to those students who were unsuccessful – but all have been given the opportunity to re-submit their applications later in the year.

### *Mathematical Success...*

As with so many subjects this year we eagerly await the results of our current Year 11s in their Mathematics courses, with more students having already achieved a grade C or above in this subject than ever before. Meanwhile, the Maths department is involved in the annual UK Mathematics Challenge – aimed at the most able young mathematics in the country. Each year the performance of our students in this national event has improved with many students gaining both bronze and silver awards – this year one of our Year 8 students came within a few marks of Gold!

This bodes well for the future but our current Year 11s are proving to be an extremely impressive bunch of mathematicians themselves... In September the department identified 65 students to take part in early entry examinations to maximise every opportunity to get the 'C' or above grade. With the publication of the March results, some 75% (49 students) have already got that magic 'C' grade, with the remaining 16 students engaged in small class tutorial lessons, ready to 'get the grade' in the June examinations.

A combination of small class teaching, additional revision sessions and on-line activities gives our students every opportunity to get the grades they need and those they deserve. If your son or daughter is still pursuing that 'C' grade in Maths then please make use of every spare moment between now and the examination. A 'C' grade in Maths and English, in particular, are the most important stepping stones to your children's education, training and employment.

You may enjoy tackling one of the questions faced by Year 8 students...

***After playing 500 games, my success rate at Spider Solitaire is 49%. Assuming I win every game from now on, how many extra games do I need to play in order that my success rate increases to 50%?***

A) 1    B) 2    C) 3    D) 10    E) 50

Good luck...



## BELONGING TOGETHER

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I wish to use this newsletter to summarise some of the major changes and new directions with respect to student behaviour. Mr Adams (Deputy Headteacher) has been working closely with key colleagues to develop a new Behaviour for Learning policy, which we will make available (in full) to parents via the school website or as a hard copy (by request).

### *Fixed Term Exclusions*

Occasionally, it is appropriate that a student is sent home for a period of between one and five days, for a serious misbehaviour. In my experience this can often be effective – our own data shows that the majority of students who are excluded never do so again!

However, the sanction is more difficult for parents, who often feel like they are the ones punished because they have to make complex family rearrangements or are forced to take unpaid time off work. Added to this is the possibility than an excluded student may, deep down, enjoy what they see as a 'day off'. I have spoken to many parents about this issue over the past 12 months and I am glad to announce that from September, exclusions will be completed *in school* under the direct supervision of senior and pastoral staff - and in a separate environment. A fixed-term exclusion will take place between 8.30am and 3.30pm therefore extending the school day for those punished in this way. These exclusions will take place in a new on-site facility and will be managed by a 'Pastoral Manager'.

### *Punctuality*

Despite our school day beginning a little later than most secondary schools (8.45am), there are still an unacceptable number of students arriving on the bell or shortly afterwards. Students arriving after the 8.45am bell will be issued with a punctuality detention. The length of detentions will depend on the number of lates recorded in that week. Obviously, reasonable explanations and exceptions will be accepted if a latecomer's parent chooses to contact the school by letter - or via a brief note in their diary.

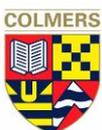
### *Detentions*

You may be aware that Mr Gove recently gave schools powers to detain a student for up to one hour without notice to their families. This decision was based on a good principle that the best sanctions are applied immediately after the wrong-doing. At Colmers, however, we shall continue to provide families with 24 hours' notice because we know many of our students are required to meet younger siblings and so forth. Occasionally, we may call you to request a same day detention; if this suits family circumstances.

### *Uniform Expectations*

Many families have expressed thanks for the clarifications and explanations with regard to school uniform and other related expectations that we published last summer. The same document remains available on the web site and is unchanged except for one additional clarification that the restriction on unnatural hair colouring is now extended to bleached hair. Again, we always try to give parents notice of such clarifications, or indeed changes, and shall therefore enforce this rule in September. I ask parents to remind themselves of our expectations and in particular managing the latest fashion of multiple ear studs...

Mrs Pavey (Deputy Headteacher) will be writing to all families, separately, to explain how our new uniform suppliers, *Marks & Spencer's*, will improve the service for our families.



## CHALLENGING MIND-SETS



Many families will be aware of the Duke of Edinburgh award programme that has been running across the UK for the past 56 years - and at Colmers since 2008. At Colmers, Miss Tucker is our D of E coordinator and works tirelessly to organise and jointly run the schemes for students at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, supported by other staff including Mrs Wilcox and Mr Queen.

The programme involves students participating in voluntary work within the community, alongside the development of a brand new skill. This is capped with overnight expeditions; under increasingly demanding conditions... Miss Tucker organises all 47 students participating in the Bronze Award (current Year 10s), whilst we work closely with a superb group called 'Horizon Expeditions', who organise the very demanding Silver and Gold expeditions to Wales and Ireland.



I worked towards the Bronze Award myself many years ago. I volunteered to work on a paired reading scheme in a local primary school, competed in a raft race along the River Severn and tackled the winds of Long Mynd. It's not the award that really matters in the end, it's the journey of self-discovery that the programme encourages - this has ensured its popularity for over half a century! At any one time, well over ¼ million young people are working towards one of the awards with almost 70,000 joining each year.

For this reason I'd like to end this newsletter with comments from some of our students whose mind-set has been so clearly challenged by their decision to participate in the D of E...

CN... *It's actually **life changing** to be fair and I'm not one to be deep but it really is.*

AP... *Words can't describe how much it actually **affects your life**... it takes all the way to Gold to actually realise that it's not about climbing mountains and hit as many peaks as possible. It's about **finding and exceeding your limits**...*

OC... *It's without doubt a collection of experiences that will **stay with me forever**. Had doubts about carrying on to the next level...but I'm glad I stuck with it and **came out on top**.*

RC... *It goes without saying that Ryan and Tim (expedition co-ordinators from 'Horizon Expeditions') showed us **we have no limits** and that DofE is not about climbing mountains, it's about having **experiences that stay with you forever** and really **changes how you approach life**. It makes you **open your eyes to wider possibilities that you never thought were possible**.*

SJ... *It's true we do live our lives in a bubble, especially us city people... however, **D of E has burst that bubble** and and **makes you believe that NOTHING is impossible**.*



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

- Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May – Year 11 Leavers' Assembly.
- Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June – Jubilee Day at Colmers...
- School will be closed for the Whitsun half term between Monday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June.
- FINAL early closure Wednesday: 13<sup>th</sup> June.
- The final day of the summer term will be Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July. All students will be dismissed at 2.00pm.
- The first day of autumn term for all students will be Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012. School will begin as normal for all students at 8.45am *sharp*.