

Headteacher: Christopher Anders BA (Hons) MA

25 May 2016

Dear Parents

The exam season is now well underway. The latest assessment grades for your child are enclosed with this letter. All students will be taking exams over the next few weeks. As the GCSEs finish, Year 10 will have exams and then other groups of children. This will help students and teachers assess their progress this year and plan for next year's teaching and learning.

You will have heard about the recent court case regarding a six year old child being taken out of school for a holiday and the resulting fine being overturned in court. Hampshire County Council are awaiting further guidance from the Department for Education. As a school we await the advice from Hampshire County Council. If you are considering a request for a leave of absence, my advice to you remains that you arrange to meet with Ms Bannard or Mrs Dare before booking. We recognise that learning takes place in a wide variety of ways, but do not want children to be disadvantaged by missing out on important points in their schooling or in exams.

Thank you for your support helping your children follow our uniform rules. So often I see groups of students in blazers and ties looking very smart and clearly taking pride in their appearance, very often this is matched by their work and attitude to learning. They will impress those they meet in life and in particular future employers who so often make decisions based on first impressions and appearance.

An important part of wearing school uniform is preparing for working life. In many jobs a dress code or uniform is part of the conditions of employment. Furthermore, almost all English schools have a uniform, it is a part of our national character. At Park we are no different. However, I do believe learning to make good choices is also important and a part of the role of a school in educating its young people is to help students understand how others might see and judge them. That is to say we can influence the way others react to us by ensuring they form a positive first impression and a smart appearance is important to make a positive first impression in working life.

In my first few years as headteacher at Park I introduced additional uniform items to create a wardrobe rather than a fixed uniform. As a result, students had a choice and also looked smarter. These changes included the introduction of a summer uniform polo shirt.

This term a number of students have taken to wearing coats or hoodies over their polo shirts instead of school blazers, sweatshirts or cardigans. The polo shirt is in place of a shirt or blouse and tie and is intended to provide a more comfortable option in warmer weather. It is not instead of a school blazer, sweatshirt or cardigan in school if the polo shirt on its own is insufficient. Coats may of course be worn over the school uniform on the way to school and, if outside, at school but are not substitutes for the uniform tops. We have lockers where coats and non-uniform tops can be left during the school day.

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Looking smart both at school and out of school, for example on trips, is important. Many schools, including other local schools, have adopted blazers over the last few years. In these schools blazers are the only acceptable top to wear with a shirt and tie. I still prefer to give our students and you a choice and want to maintain this as one of our special features as a school.

We have also worked hard to keep the cost of school uniform down and while Park logo tops and ties can only be purchased from approved suppliers other items can be bought anywhere. We do stipulate that the trousers and skirts worn should meet certain criteria but do not say which shop they should be bought from. Many schools only allow trousers, skirts and other items such as PE shorts to be bought from an approved supplier and some insist they also have a logo. This pushes the costs of uniform up further. I wish to avoid this. However, if trousers worn as part of uniform are fashion items, such as jeans or leggings, and not trousers we may decide to be more specific about where these can be purchased. In the case of shoes at Park, they should be all black. Again, we try to help you keep the cost of purchasing the uniform down while also allowing choice, so we do not insist on polishable surfaces or leather, but do ask that the uniform rules are followed.

Please can you continue to make sure that your son/daughter does have the correct uniform items to choose from and that they are worn to school each day. If you are unclear about an item of clothing please speak to a member of the WSG team, Ms Bannard or Mrs Dare. Staff do not wish to have early morning confrontations with students who are not prepared for school. Your continued support in this will help avoid the need to become more prescriptive with the uniform clothing for our school.

If you are a parent of a Year 11 student you will have received the exam timetable and study club dates for half-term.

If you are a parent of a Year 10 student you will be aware that your child has their second Maths exam on the morning of Thursday 9 June. In preparation for this exam, members of the Maths department will be in school on Wednesday, 1 June during the half-term break to provide extra provision. The plan is that students sit a mock exam at 9.30-11.30am and then from 12.00-2.00pm they mark the paper. Breakfast will be provided at 9.00am and lunch at 11.30am. We strongly advise your child attends this session as it will provide useful revision and preparation for the exam.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Anders".

Christopher Anders
Headteacher