



19<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you at the end of Christmas Term, looking forward to 2023.

We have certainly faced challenges this term as a community. There have been many highs and we have so much to celebrate about this wonderful school.

We returned in September, happy with our fabulous examination results. They mark a real change in the School's academic performance and, inevitably, resulted in the largest Year 12 intake the school has had. We have been delighted to continue our embedded programme of improving teaching and learning, and we will continue to drive standards yet higher for our wonderful students.

Those who follow our Facebook page will have seen some of our many and varied activities. As a snapshot of what has happened only recently, our Sixth Form team were runners up in the Green Schools Challenge, our students have enjoyed success in Sport, Performing Arts, and a select few had the incredibly moving experience of visiting the Knife Angel, on display in Milton Keynes.

We've not escaped challenges, though. We closed for summer early, because it was too hot, but attendance this week has been disrupted by the extreme cold. Illness struck us hard recently and we were forced to reduce the numbers of students on site. We have had to postpone our School show, *Annie*, until January.

However, congratulations to our staff and students, we held it together!

### Changes to the School Day

Student Voice also told us that facilities are too cramped at breaktimes. Students don't like mixing toilet use across a wide age-range. Therefore, we have created a split to lunchtime, which will allow students more space and freedom to play football or basketball, or to seek peace and quiet. The start and end time of the school day will not be affected, nor will the fact that students have five, one hour lessons, per day:

Time	Activity	
08:20	Gates Open	Tutor time in the morning will allow tutors to "check in" with their form.
08:30	Tutor Time	
08:40	Period 1	Session A will be lunchtime for Years 9/10/11. Session A will be the form time programme (eg assembly) for Years 7/8.
09:40	Period 2	
10:40	Break	Session B will be the reverse of Session A.
11:00	Period 3	Sixth Form has more scope to be flexible, for example an elongated lunchtime on Fridays.
12:00	Period 4	
13:00	Session / Lunch A	
13:30	5 Minutes Movement	
13:35	Session / Lunch B	
14:05	5 Minutes Movement	
14:10	Period 5	
15:10	End of School Day	

## Behaviour For Learning

We've made no secret that, like many schools, we are not satisfied with standards of behaviour currently. They have fallen short of what we have become used to. We have conducted extensive staff, parent and student surveys and received some valuable insights.

We will be addressing this in these key ways from January:

- Various changes to our routines, including "split" lunchtimes
- Putting in place further support for a small number of students who consistently struggle with the expectations of a large, busy school
- Refreshing our expectations of what positive, respectful behaviour looks like
- Putting energy and resources into celebrating the stunning achievements of most of our students

On the last point, the vast majority of our students are coming to school every day and doing what they need to do. Since September:

- We have awarded 99,000 reward points, and the ratio of positive:negative events is nearly 10:1
- We have over 1000 students with a positive score – those are the students we need to be thinking about, talking about and providing for!

We are fortunate to enjoy the support of many of our families and we will develop methods of sharing a much more positive view on our students' achievements at school.

Sadly, we have noted an increase in unacceptable behaviour from our parents. We appreciate the frustrations, we also appreciate that some of our families are enduring tough times, for whatever reason. However, there is no excuse for verbal abuse and we will not tolerate it.

## Uniform – January 2023

Due to staff illness in the large part, followed by the cold snap, uniform has become a "backseat" issue for many staff in the last few weeks. Last week, with morning temperatures of well below freezing, we have had huge rise in students wearing trainers and hoodies. From a safety perspective, we want them to walk without slipping and to not freeze when it is minus 5 degrees.

However, this does not represent a relaxation of our expectations for good. In January, we return to our united stance – if a uniform issue cannot be corrected, we reserve the right to keep the student from normal activities, until such a time as it can be. Our "pink slip" and contacting home strategies will continue. Hoodies will be confiscated (and returned in due course).

## Uniform – September 2023

Meanwhile, September 2023 is fast approaching and at this point, we will expect all of our students to have migrated into new uniform. We recommend that going forward, any replacement items are in the new brand – blazers, ties, PE t-shirts. We also remind you that the only acceptable skirt from September 2023 will be pleated, touching/just above the knee. Please refer to the Uniform section on our website, which includes details of our uniform supplier, Uniform Direct. You can access this area by clicking on this link: <https://www.buckinghamschool.org/ouruniform>

All the original items remain welcome for the rest of the school year.

## Catering

We have been excited to tell the students this week about our new caterers, *Innovate*. *Innovate* will continue to employ our current staff, but will also increase staffing. They are committed to increasing the quality of food and the speed of service, thus encouraging more and more students to eat meals at school. School meal pricing will not be affected and of course, this will not affect free school meal entitlements.

*Innovate's* model is "destination dining", which generates the "high street feel" of freshly cooked, well-presented food. *Innovate* have operated at The Royal Latin School for the last 12 years. We are all looking forward to them starting here in Term 4!

## Teaching Staff

At the end of term, we will say goodbye to Mr Merrick, Mrs Caesar and Miss Sinclair from the teaching staff. Mr Mandel will continue to be with us for one day of the week, though. Congratulations to Mr Merrick, who takes up a senior leadership post in a new school.

A new CL of Mathematics, Mrs Murray, takes over from Mr Merrick in the new year. Miss Carracedo-Fernandez takes the reins in the languages department in January. Mr Mandel's teaching will be covered by staff already on the team.

We also welcome Mrs Ribbans back from maternity, including as Head of Year 8, having been covered so well in that role by Miss Wheatley.

From our Support Team, we say a fond farewell to Mr Claridge and Mrs Ferris.

Any families whose child is changing Form Tutor will receive direct contact about the change. Following feedback, this will always happen going forward.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Over Christmas**

We have previously shared a flyer of support available for mental health and well-being. Please find this attached again. For further links visit the school website <https://www.buckinghamschool.org/safeguarding>

### **Support With The Cost of Living Crisis**

The school has published an excellent "Cost of Living Support Services Directory" in the Parents section of our website. Find it here:

[https://www.buckinghamschool.org/\\_site/data/files/files/admission-form/Cost%20of%20living%20directory.pdf?pid=10](https://www.buckinghamschool.org/_site/data/files/files/admission-form/Cost%20of%20living%20directory.pdf?pid=10)

All that remains is to wish the whole community a wonderful Christmas. We hope that everyone enjoys a happy, healthy and successful 2023!

With best wishes,



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