

Our Ref: BS/KO

January 2014

ALL PARENTS

Dear Parents/Guardians

Welcome back to the new term at Dormston. I hope that you and your families had a peaceful and happy Christmas.

I am writing to update you on some of the work that we will be doing at Dormston during 2014. It promises to be an exciting and busy time but I am confident that by the end of the year the school will be in a much stronger position so that we provide all our young people with the best possible opportunity to maximise their potential in all areas of their education and personal development.

I have always believed that the key to being successful is having high expectations of everyone connected to a school. As a school we are determined to improve the quality of education that each of our pupils receives as quickly as possible. It is for these reasons that we have decided that 2014 will be Dormston's "**Year of High Expectations**".

During the Autumn term we have worked hard with the support of parents and pupils to change the school's ethos so that we have high expectations of every pupil. To help us do this we have reset every child's target grades so that they provide real challenge, we have monitored and evaluated in great detail the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in our classrooms and invested heavily in training to make sure that our teachers have all the skills they require to deliver excellent learning. We are not where we want to be at the moment but I believe that we have made significant improvements.

Our expectations in terms of attendance and behaviour have significantly increased. As a school our attendance target is now 95% and I am pleased to be able to report that overall attendance is 1% higher this year compared to last. Pupils and staff are becoming increasingly aware of the standards of behaviour that we expect. I spend a good deal of time walking around the school and dropping into lessons. My own experiences suggest that there is a general positive climate for learning, however, I am even more reassured that we are moving in the right direction when pupils, governors and teachers tell me that they have noticed a significant difference.

Uniform is another area of positive news. As you can imagine we have had many visitors over the last 4 months and they have all commented on how smart our pupils look. Our young people report that they feel greater pride in wearing their uniform than was previously the case. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in this area. As a parent I understand how difficult it can be to convince a child that they need to abide by the rules but my experience tells me that if a school has a uniform it's crucial that pupils wear it correctly to help create the right climate for learning. The school's uniform has not changed but we are now enforcing it.

Over the course of the next 12 months there are some specific areas that we will focus much of our efforts on. The areas are:

- ✓ **Teaching and Learning** - No lessons to be less than Good (OFSTED Criteria);
- ✓ **Marking and Feedback** - All teachers to provide at least Good (OFSTED Criteria) marking and feedback for all pupils;
- ✓ **Pastoral Care** - A revamped House system that supports excellent behaviour, attendance, encourages pupils to take part and feel part of their community;
- ✓ **Increased Extra - Curricular Opportunities** - More chances for pupils to take part in school life outside the classroom;
- ✓ **Improved Careers Advice** - Increased investment in support and guidance to pupils on what to do after they leave Dormston;
- ✓ **A Better Learning Environment** - Carefully targeted use of resources to help create a positive learning environment;
- ✓ **A New Curriculum** - Developing the school day so that pupils develop key employment skills and have increased choice at Key Stage 4.

This is not an exhaustive list but hopefully gives you a flavour of what we want to achieve over the coming months. We know we have much to do and that we will not always get it right but we can promise that we will work tirelessly to improve the school for the benefit of our pupils.

I am fortunate that I work with a team of dedicated professionals who share my views on what every child deserves to receive when they come to school. I am even luckier to work for a group of young people who have responded positively to what we are trying to improve in school. If as a school we also benefit from the support of our parents then the school will progress quickly.

As a school we know that 2014 is a big year and that we face many challenges but working together I am confident that all our young people will have a successful year.

Thank you as always for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Ben Stitchman
Head Teacher