

Our Ref: BSN/KON

July 2014

### **ALL PARENTS**

Dear Parent/Carer

It hardly seems possible that a whole school year has passed since I became Headteacher at Dormston. Much has changed in school since September and much more will have changed when the pupils return at the end of the summer holidays. As you know, we have been working this year to refocus everyone connected with the school on getting the basics of what we believe a great education is made up of right. The school has focused on:

- ✓ **Attendance;**
- ✓ **Behaviour;**
- ✓ **Classroom;**
- ✓ **Ethos;**
- ✓ **Environment;**
- ✓ **Extra- Curricular.**

We believe that we have made good progress towards making our school an excellent place to be for our pupils. Our attendance for the year stands at 94.7% which is a significant improvement. It is likely that this will see the school in the top third for attendance nationally, compared to last year when it was in the bottom third, and will mean that we are one of the best attended schools in Dudley.

Behaviour has improved during the course of the year. It has been necessary to reset the expectations of every member of our community in terms of what behaviour should be like. This has meant that we have had to make some tough decisions to establish boundaries so that pupils feel safe and can learn effectively. I make no apologies for this and have no plans to change our beliefs or approach. I have always believed that it is part of any school's responsibilities to help teach young people about right and wrong and that there are consequences for every action. We are a tolerant and supportive community, but we have very high expectations of everyone connected to Dormston. We will never be afraid to tackle anything that falls below our standards because we believe that this will benefit individuals as well as the whole school community. The pleasing news is that pupils, visitors and staff all believe that behaviour has improved greatly and that this is having a direct impact on the quality of learning and how safe pupils feel in school.

The main focus of our work in school has been to improve what is happening in our classrooms. An aim of the school is to work with pupils to enhance their attitude to learning, but as teachers we fully accept that it is our responsibility to set the tone. We can do this by planning challenging lessons, setting work that allows every pupil to show what they have learnt and then marking work so that pupils can see what they did well and what they need to do even better. We have developed a rigorous monitoring programme so that we know what is happening in classrooms. As a result of this and the hard work of colleagues we have seen good progress. However, we are not in any way complacent. We know that we must maintain standards and look to get better again. I have been

pleased that colleagues in school have responded so positively. I can honestly say that they are as keen as I am to make Dormston a great school.

Our ethos remains unchanged. We believe that every child has talent, that we should expect the very best from them and that we should work relentlessly to help them achieve their potential. We are keen to reward and recognise pupils who work hard and for this reason we have designed a new Reward System, to begin in September. This focuses on effort, attendance and contribution to the school life and community.

The school environment will look quite different when pupils return from the summer holidays. The Quad, Canteen and Atrium will be transformed. We will also be getting rid of the mobile classrooms and turning the lower playground into Netball courts. The School's Governors have agreed to invest heavily and I strongly believe that the changes we are making will have a positive impact on how we all feel about our school.

There have been several new developments in our Extra-Curricular programme this year. Our school Young Enterprise team won the Regional final which is a remarkable achievement when you consider that all the other teams were at least two years older. The Duke of Edinburgh programme has been so successful that we have decided to extend it and include the Silver Award as well as the Bronze. My thanks go to all colleagues that give of their time so generously to create many great opportunities for our pupils.

Whilst we feel that we have made good progress this year we know that we still have much to do to become the school that we would wish. To help us improve further we are making further changes for the next academic year other than the ones already outlined above. Perhaps the biggest one will be our new curriculum and timetable. To begin with it will feel strange because lessons will be longer, at an hour each, and the timetable will run over two weeks. However, the school day will start and end at the same time. We are convinced that it will have a significant positive impact on the amount of progress that each pupil makes. The new curriculum will also mean that pupils will spend more time studying English and Maths in smaller average class sizes. At Key Stage 4 pupils will have greater choice in terms of the options that they can study. I am very excited about the potential of the changes that Governors have agreed to.

### **Summer Holidays**

I know that the last thing that anyone wants to think about at the start of the holidays is returning in September but vital decisions are made during the six weeks break. New uniform is often bought and for this reason I have enclosed a copy of the school uniform checklist. Whilst it has not changed please read it carefully. I do not want to have to tell any parent that the uniform they have purchased is unacceptable but we do have strict rules that we expect every pupil to adhere to, without exception. Perhaps some key points to note are regarding:

- piercings;
- coats - they must be navy or black. Please note that **denim** or **leather** coats or any other colour are not permitted;
- hairstyles/hair colour;
- no tight/legging style trousers.

We are a school that believes in a smart uniform and we make no apology for that. Part of being in the Dormston community is that each parent, pupil and member of staff agrees to all our rules when they join.

Thank you for all your support this year. I hope you and your family have a happy and sunny summer break.

I look forward to welcoming back all pupils in September.

Yours sincerely

**Mr B Stitchman**  
**Head Teacher**