

Our Ref: BSN/KON

July 2015

**ALL PARENTS/CARERS**

Dear Parent/Carer

Incredibly, we are at the end of another academic year. Much has happened and changed over the last 12 months, not least our most recent OFSTED report that saw the school removed from Special Measures in one academic year. Perhaps the most pleasing aspect was that we were described as a “rapidly improving school”. It is my judgement that that is as true today as it was in November but I am all too aware that if we want this to remain the case we must continue to work every bit as hard and even smarter. You have my word that we will do everything that we can to make sure that this happens.

As you know, we have a simple mantra that we believe makes a school a good place to learn. High Attendance, excellent Behaviour, great Classroom teaching, a high quality Environment and a wide range of Extra-Curricular activities are the key factors in ensuring a successful school experience and help to underpin the school’s overall Ethos. Our focus next year will be on improving all these areas once again for all our pupils.

Attendance at Dormston has improved dramatically over the last two years. This year, it stands at well over 95%, an improvement on the 93% we had in 2013. This is a significant change and one that we are determined to build upon. Working with the school to ensure good attendance is arguably the most important thing that any parent/carer can do for their child because if a pupil is not in school they are not learning. The Government have decided to up the ante from September so that any child who has attendance of less than 90% will be considered to be Persistently Absent (this has changed from 85%). I fully support this move and as a school we will be rigorous in ensuring that none of our pupils fall below this threshold. Clearly, there are occasions when pupils are unable to attend school but every child should have the intention of achieving 100% attendance by the end of the school year. I often ask pupils who have poor attendance if on any of the days that they were away if they could have attended. The answer is always the same, that they could and therefore they should. I would ask all parents and carers to take an interest in attendance and only allow a child to be absent in exceptional circumstances.

Good behaviour and a calm and orderly atmosphere are key factors in ensuring a school is successful. I take an unapologetically tough stance on behaviour because any poor conduct affects the learning and wellbeing of others and this is unacceptable. Secondly, it is our job, as a school, to contribute to the development of all our pupils and part of that is helping them to learn what is acceptable in the wider community so that when they leave school they are good neighbours and citizens. We will adopt exactly the same approach again next year. We will also reinforce with all pupils what is acceptable and what the consequences are of not meeting our expectations in September.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes, as far the pupils are concerned, for September is what they can wear on their feet. As you know, I have now sent out two letters explaining the changes (this information is also on the school’s website). These changes apply without exception to every pupil. I know that parents may have to have some difficult conversations with their child(ren) over the summer regarding shoes but please be advised that if the school rules are broken new shoes will have to be purchased by parents/carers. This

also applies to all uniform, including hairstyles and piercings. The message is: please do not do anything that cannot be altered back to meet the school's rules come September. The school reserves the right to withdraw a child from their lessons until we are happy with uniform and appearance. Decisions on what is acceptable are not pupils and parents to make but fall under the remit of the Head Teacher.

We will be working tirelessly to increase the quality of teaching and therefore learning again in the next year. I am pleased with the progress made in this area but there is much more to be done. Please rest assured that we will never stop trying to improve. One particular area of focus will be increasing the challenge in lessons that every child faces. I think we have come a long way over the past two years but I am equally convinced that we can improve significantly again in this area. We have designed a number of innovative and challenging training programmes for our staff to help us to be successful in this area.

Parents of Year 7-10 pupils (no change for Year 11) will also need to learn a whole new assessment structure following a change to how the Government will award GCSE grades in the future. We will write to parents and carers in September to explain how we propose to do this. It is a huge change for all schools but I am confident that we have developed a clear, simple but informative system for pupils, parents and staff to understand.

For the second year running there will be major building works this summer. The Governors have agreed to invest heavily in new facilities and an improved environment. Hopefully, the pupils will return home after the first day in September excited by the changes we have made. Interestingly, I have already got a pretty good idea of what I would like to do in the Summer of 2016! There is nothing like forward planning.

We have had a real focus on extra-curricular activities over the last few months with many pupils signing up to take part in opportunities as diverse as Masterchef and Trampolining Club. In September, we will be offering some very exciting new activities including Archery, Fencing and Cycling. Details will follow when we return to school. I would ask all parents and carers to encourage their child(ren) to take part. Pupils can gain an enormous amount from being involved in some learning outside the classroom.

The school's ethos remains unchanged. We want, and expect, nothing less than the best for each and every one of our pupils in all aspects of school life. You have my word that as a school we will leave no stone unturned in trying to achieve our aim, and I would hope to be able to count on every parent and carer's support.

I would like to wish you all a happy and safe summer.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

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