

Our Ref: BSN/KON

October 2015

ALL PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parent/Carer

We are almost at the end of our first, and longest, half-term of the year and as such I thought I would take the opportunity to write to keep you up to date with life at Dormston and our main foci for the next half-term.

The start of the year has been great. The pupils look far smarter than before; they are working harder in lessons and attending more frequently than ever. The confidence that everyone in our school community has taken from our record results in the summer is palpable. There is now a real belief that our pupils are superb and therefore capable of outstanding achievements. This means that all staff are challenging our pupils more and the children are very keen to make as much progress as possible so that they can follow their dreams. It is wonderful to see and long may it continue.

You will be unsurprised to know that I think we can do much better again. As always, our main focus will be improving the quality of teaching in school. One of the happy benefits of being a rapidly improving school is that when you have a vacancy the quality of candidates who apply is high. We have been fortunate over the last few months to employ some excellent new teaching and non-teaching staff. This obviously improves the quality of education that every child enjoys. We will continue to rigorously monitor the quality of teaching, share what is good, and look to support when learning is not where we need it to be.

The attitude of pupils in lessons is now very good. We can still improve in this area but there is no doubt that it is vastly different to two years ago. However, I am convinced that the next significant area for us to improve on is homework. I have spoken to a lot of staff and pupils about homework. The conclusions that I have drawn are that pupils are now being set more meaningful homework and are doing much more than was previously the case. However, as a school we are not where we want to be. Not all Headteachers agree, but I think homework is vital for the development of pupils. It teaches pupils discipline, self-reliance and can help to significantly increase the amount of learning and therefore progress they make.

I believe, that in a school where the completion of purposeful homework is universal it reveals a lot about the attitude of pupils. It tells us that they are desperate to do their best, achieve their dreams, and are developing the necessary skills and attributes to make it happen. I cannot imagine that there is a teacher, parent or pupil who would not want that. Over the next half-term we will be focusing on this area. It will require a team effort from parents/carers, pupils and staff. Parents and carers can help by asking pupils about their homework and asking to see it. I will write again in the next few weeks to explain exactly what we will be doing.

Our Extra-Curricular provision is simply incredible. I have never worked or heard of a state school that offers the range of activities that we now do. We offer everything from fencing to archery to stained glass window making, and pretty much anything and everything in between. It is quite normal now to see over 250 pupils staying behind after school to take part. The change is dramatic and welcome. If your child is not doing something outside lessons please encourage them to join in. All the activities are free to the pupils and will have a positive impact on how they view school and therefore how well they learn.

Once again, the weeks have hurtled by. After we return from half-term it will be only 7 weeks until we break up for Christmas (not that I am trying to wish our lives away). Being in school, every day, counts, so please make sure that your child attends every day after the half-term.

Thank you as ever for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Mr B A Stitchman
Head Teacher