



Dear Parent and Carers

I am writing to introduce myself as the new Headteacher of Ounsdale. I am very excited to take up this post, my opinion of Ounsdale is very positive and I very much look forward to working with you and your children.

I have a strong belief that education at its best involves allowing young people to discover what they are passionate and talented at, and allowing these talents to be nurtured and developed. High academic achievement should be a key aim, but there should also be a strong emphasis on sport, performing arts and creativity. I highly value kindness, positivity and honesty in others, and so these attributes in Ounsdale students will also be recognised and developed.

Highlights of summer 2018

The examination results of both A-level and GCSE students in August was a cause for celebration, A-level students received a raft of A and Dist* grades allowing them to take up prestigious offers at Universities. Students are going on to study/work at a wide range of institutions including Sport and Coaching at Birmingham, Sociology at Cardiff, and Forensic Psychology at Liverpool John Moores.

The GCSE results were also a cause for celebration, with more students achieving a good pass (grade 5+) in English and Maths compared to previous years. Lots of students received excellent results, but one young man particularly stood out achieving grade 9/A* in all 11 of his GCSE subjects, this puts him within the top 200-500 students within the country – wow!!

Building work

There has been a lot of work completed at Ounsdale over the summer holiday. It was quite a rush to get so much work completed before the children returned to school, I have never been so relieved to see glass in window panes. The teaching block windows have been replaced. The playground was dug up so that flood prevention tanks could be inserted underground, the playground was then filled back in and tarmacked. An outbuilding towards the rear of the site has been demolished. In addition, work has started to change the layout of the school entrance and office suite.

We are very excited real work is under way to transform the learning environment of Ounsdale High School. We very much want the building fabric to be modern, comfortable, and able to support the first class teaching that takes place within it. Work will now continue on refurbishing the teaching block and beginning the new teaching block. However, work will take place at a slower pace in term time to avoid disruption to learning.

The glazing of the windows at the back of the building on corridors of the teaching block have not yet been completed and so these areas will be out of action for students. However, all classrooms can be accessed safely.

Mobile Phone Policy

We appreciate there are many benefits in the use of mobile phones, particularly in allowing communication between young people and their families when commuting to and from school.

However, mobile phones can be a distraction to learning. From September 2018 the use of mobile phones will not be allowed during the school day. Phones must be turned off, not on silent mode. Phones can be brought into school but they must be turned off prior to students entering the school gates, and must remain off until the student leaves the school site. Any mobile phone brought onto site remains the sole responsibility of the student, the school can take no responsibility for the safe keeping of mobile phones.

If a student is found to be using a mobile phone or has a mobile phone switched on the phone will be confiscated, in the first instance this will be given back to the student at the end of that school day. However, if a student repeatedly uses the mobile phone during the school day you as a parent/guardian will need to collect the phone. The full policy is now available on the school web-site, this policy will be implemented in all Invictus schools and is in line with policies of many secondary schools in the UK.

Homework

To allow students to maximise learning, the rigour and amount of homework students receive will increase from September 2018. We know students in independent schools and students that achieve top grades at GCSE and A-level understand the need for independent study and develop this skill early in their education. We want this same skill to be evident in the students at Ounsdale.

We have decided to allocate a set night for homework from a particular subject, and whilst there is some flexibility on when the homework can be completed, we do suggest students adhere to the timetables to allow them to manage their workload and remain organised.

KS3 (Year 7 – 9)

Subject	Duration	Set On	Completed By
Maths	45 Minutes	Monday	Wednesday
English	45 Minutes	Tuesday	Thursday
Science	45 Minutes	Wednesday	Friday
Humanities	45 Minutes (History & Geography combined)	Thursday	Monday
Languages	45 Minutes	Friday	Tuesday

KS4 (Year 10 - 11)

Subject	Duration	Set On	Completed By
Maths	1 Hour	Monday	Wednesday
English	1 Hour	Tuesday	Thursday
Science	1 Hour	Wednesday	Friday
Humanities & Option C	1 Hour 1 Hour	Thursday	Monday
Languages & Option D	1 Hour 1 Hour	Friday	Tuesday

Students will be expected to completed 1 hour of independent revision in English, Maths and Science in addition to this homework.

If students do not have the lesson on that day, they hand it when they next have the lesson.

The full details are available on the web-site, we will be reviewing the effectiveness of this new system on a termly basis.

Please can we ask for your cooperation in reinforcing our expectation about the importance of homework and independent study. However, please remember it is the students that should be completing the homework not the parents, I am sure you already have a multitude of qualifications and work experience!! You will be able to view homework set on WISE, if students have not completed homework you will be informed by text message.

Reminders

Uniform

The standard of uniform at Ounsdale is excellent, the high standards will be maintained this academic year. Please see the policy for detailed information. Clip-on ties must be worn by all students, house colours for Year 7 – 9. Footwear needs to be black leather that is polishable with no logos displayed. Please remember there can only be one earring in each ear, no other piercings are allowed and all earrings must be removed for PE. Please also note that false and acrylic nails are not permitted.

Equipment

Please ensure students come to school with a clear examination style pencil case containing the minimum of 2 black pens, pencil, ruler, and green pen. Other items such as protractor, eraser, compass and coloured pencils would be highly useful.

Contacting the school

Support from parents/carers is crucial in the education of young people. We very much welcome and actively encourage communication. If you have concerns about your child's progress in a particular subject area, or feel there is an issue that needs addressing, please do not hesitate in contacting the school. To ensure effective and timely dialogue please contact your child's tutor in the first instance, tutors will then liaise with subject teachers and Heads of House on your behalf.

If a message has been left for a tutor we will aim to return contact as soon as possible and within 2 working days. We will endeavour to ensure timely feedback, but if you have not had a reply within this time frame please try again. In the unforeseen case of this failing to elicit a response please contact your child's Head of House directly.

Thank-you for your time in reading this lengthy newsletter, there is always so much to consider at the beginning of a school year. Please can I finish by saying that I am very much looking forward to the year ahead, I anticipate great things from your children, and I hope we will work closely together as staff, parents/carers, and students, to maximise learning in all of its forms to ensure success for the students of Ounsdale High School.

With warm regards,

Dr Gemma Smith

Headteacher

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