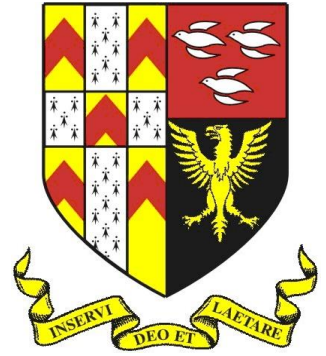


School Update - 5 Sept 2022 - A New School Year

The following message was sent out to parents via email, and via the website, Facebook and Twitter on 5 September 2022:

All,

Welcome to a new school year and with news of rocketing energy prices, empty supermarket shelves, on-going war, hospital queues, COVID comebacks, and threats of strike action, we're back too.



Rest assured we're not looking for a 3-day week and amidst these problems we'll still look to sprinkle some fairy-dust in the lives of your children and do all we can to help them to make the progress they need.

This message will include the following:

- * Return to School
- * Summer Exam Results
- * Building Works
- * Communication
- * Standards
- * COVID
- * Other News

Return to School

All Year 7-11 students arrive for school on Wednesday 7 September for 8.40am and report to their new tutor rooms. Our staff will be around to guide them but even better if you tell them where they are going - with the new tutor bases listed below:

Year 7 - 7D1 = U6 / 7D2 = C6 / 7G1 = U9 / 7G2 = U7 / 7J1 = F3 / 7J2 = W10 / 7S1 = C7 / 7S2 = S6

Year 8 - 8D1 = W9 / 8D2 = U2 / 8G1 = G5 / 8G2 = T3 / 8J1 = W4 / 8J2 = W5 / 8S1 = S5 / 8S2 = S8

Year 9 - 9D1 = U8 / 9D2 = M1 / 9G1 = G6 / 9G2 = S2 / 9J1 = W3 / 9J2 = W2 / 9S1 = G7 / 9S2 = S4

Year 10 - 10D1 = U5 / 10D2 = F1 / 10G1 = U4 / 10G2 = G3 / 10J1 = W7 / 10J2 = U3 / 10S1 = F2 / 10S2 = S3

Year 11 - 11D1 = M2 / 11D2 = W6 / 11G1 = G4 / 11G2 = G2 / 11J1 = W1 / 11J2 = F4 / 11S1 = S1 / 11S2 = S7

Sixth Form - 6D1 = C2 / 6D2 = U1 / 6G1 = C1 / 6G2 = C5 / 6J1 = C10 / 6J2 = C9 / 6S1 = C4 / 6S2 = C3

Our new Year 7 students should report to the theatre via main reception where their tutors will pick them up and walk them to their tutor base.

Our Sixth Formers come in at 2.00pm on Tuesday 6 September for a 1hr debrief on what lies ahead and then return the next day like everyone else. They have a different and big year ahead so the more we can prepare for it the better.

Summer Exam Results

The early indications on our exam results are that they are very strong but we are waiting to see how the Department for Education (DfE) clarify critical measurements like 'Progress' (so how much the students have improved since the end of Year 6).

Back in Summer 2019, our school topped the DfE Performance Tables for Staffordshire, and then we have had two years of Teacher's Grades, but this year we seem to have topped all key measurements from all those years. This sounds great but we'll see what the 'scores on the doors' are later in the Autumn Term.

Regardless, of any league tables, which as I have said elsewhere are in many ways pretty ludicrous, it does seem that the hard work of the students, parents, and staff has paid off. The overwhelming faces we saw on Results Day were smiling broadly and all children had successes somewhere along the line. This is what we aim for.

School Entry

Since academising in September 2019 we have managed three successful funding bids that have brought in over £3million of investment in our school site. This would never have happened without becoming an academy.

The most recent 'win' was over £400,000 for safeguarding / security measures which include fencing around the entire school site, new pedestrian markings, and a new entry gate system to protect students at the start and end of the day.

Essentially, we have had children and staff picking their way through cars parked all over the place and negotiating leisure centre and County Council office drivers battling with parent drivers over who has right of way. For us it is quite simple, the children's safety should have right of way.

The new arrangements will come into force later this term and the school gates will be closed for a short window at the start and end of the day. The gates will have a pass system for staff though naturally buses, etc, will be allowed entry. We have set up a separate filter entry for the leisure centre. Of course, staff will continue to be on duty to supervise the children.

It is worth reflecting that anyone who has been to a local primary school, or visited other local secondary schools, will know there is only one school in the area that allows cars to have free rein on their site. This is why the DfE agreed with us that these measures are vitally important and it is why we have got both the District Council and County Council to buy into this too.

Inevitably, there will be one or two parents upset at having to arrange pick-ups slightly away from school, but we cannot allow the ease for one to override the safety of the 1,000+ who have to get buses or walk home.

We will send out more details before the arrangements kick off.

Building Works

Amidst our extensive roofing repairs and full electrical re-wire, we have managed to secure further improvements to the school site. It has been a hectic summer and lots has been achieved with as much wheeling-and-dealing as an episode of 'Only Fools & Horses'.

The school theatre has had an overhaul with new decoration, seating, carpets, lighting, sound systems, ceilings, etc. The room is central to the school - whether it be assemblies or 'Chicago' - and we were delighted to wave off the 1970s as they left the stage. Even so, there are still some 70's relics around the school - such as myself - still hanging about.

Elsewhere, the two main toilet blocks have been completely gutted with new toilets, floor to ceiling cubicles, communal washing facilities, flooring, and decoration. Despite other schools going for unisex toilets, we have maintained the gender split - though at the moment we need to sort out the signs! There are other toilet blocks that still need the overhaul, including the staff / theatre toilets, but we're trying hard to get there.

Communication

I'll look to ensure I send out these emails at key points of the school year but it is important to emphasise how we rely on you keeping yourself in the loop in terms of school business. I won't bore you by droning on about the costs that prohibit printed letters, etc, but will stress the many ways by which you can keep yourself in the loop.

The EduLink app gives you free day-to-day information on how your child is getting on; whether that be House Points to late marks, or reports to timetables. The school website is a trove of information and the newsfeed on it tells you everything that is going on. Our Facebook and Twitter pages have every news article automatically linked to them and we are on Instagram too.

If you ever have any queries then your first contact point is: office@friary.greywoodmst.co.uk.

Diary Dates:

The term dates can be viewed on the school website via this link: <https://www.friaryschool.co.uk/term-dates-2022-2023/>

The key dates for your diary can be viewed on the school website via this link: <https://www.friaryschool.co.uk/term-dates-2022-2023/>

Of course, further events and such will be added through the school year but all the key details are here.

Standards

We are keeping our fingers crossed that we'll get maximum help from you all when it comes to your children being sent into school on time, wearing the correct uniform, having their progress checked on EduLink, and getting homework done to a good standard.

Often, after the 6-week break, and particularly since COVID, things are not always in place on arrival, despite a good start being so important. The world around us is only getting tougher and so good habits and good success at school are not getting any less important.

We'll be driving home key messages throughout the year and reminding your child what is expected from them. Certainly, they'll only do better if you back us up and if they direct their energies to learning rather than anything else.

COVID

There is no COVID guidance coming from the government and so we are heading into this term very much operating under 'normal' times.

Even so, with winter coming, all of us as parents will know coughs and sneezes will likely be rife, and in order to keep children healthy and in school, we would encourage them to wash their hands, use sanitiser, and to take responsibility when they have a cold.

If anything emerges then we'll ensure we let you know ASAP - maybe even Liz will give schools a heads up before it appears on the TV news.

Others News

(i) Energy Costs:

We have to face the reality that the surging energy prices are affecting every home and many of us will already be changing our use and making compromises. Unfortunately, there will be similar thinking in school, and we are certainly not going to be an oasis of tropical warmth.

The bottom-line is that school budgets have not received extra support for the price rises and the option is to either reduce staff (so larger class sizes), reduce courses (so less life opportunities), or use less energy (so less heating). As one parent commented on Twitter: "You have an impossible task."

You cannot have missed these problem facing schools but here is one example of a report on them: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-62774220>

We are hoping that once the current government paralysis stops, there may be some support, but at the moment there is no news. If you have a silver bullet, or better still £200,000+, then feel free to get in touch.

Our core purpose is education, and the value of qualifications and experiences from school is a long-lasting one, so our priorities will sit there. If grandma knits, then ask her to dust off those needles.

(ii) Food Costs:

We will be reviewing our canteen prices when we return - not good news - but anyone who has been to the supermarket recently will know that costs have only gone one way.

We have a limit on Free School Meals funding - there is no temporary increase due - so this will provide a baseline for the food offer. However, all items are likely to see an increase.

Just on the canteen, I will look to get the menus on the school website - under the Parents tab - as soon as they are finalised - so families can better plan. We'll also do work on communication Healthy Eating messages so we can steer children to the most wholesome options.

(iii) Wider Learning:

I'm reading this message back and thinking there is a lot of gloom and doom here, but there are reason to be cheerful.

We'll have our extra-curricular offer out in the next couple of weeks and they'll be 101 things to get involved in. We have schools shows and concerts to look forward to. We have field trips going out - even overseas - and sports and debating teams will soon be setting off into battle. Also, the usual array of boosters and interventions will be there for children heading into exams.

The kitchen sink may not have too much hot water in it but we'll still be throwing it into our efforts to give your children the best schooling deal around.

(iv) PTFA:

We've struggled with PTFA membership through COVID and our existing team - who are healthy in numbers and commitment - need some reinforcements as their children reach the upper Year groups. Having donated £15,000 to the refurbishment of the theatre, their funding and championing to our school is crucial.

If you can sign up to help - via office@friary.greywoodmst.co.uk - please do so and you'll be chipping in with some brilliant people and staff from our school. If this is beyond you time-wise, then sign up to our Parents'

Lottery where £1 per week could win your £1,000s. Also, look out for the events that come up through the year - coming along will not be a chore.

We're a big part of one another's lives and the children who see their parents working alongside their teachers always seem to do well. Is this something you can do ?

Finally

So that's the end of this message, lots laid out and more to come too, but I'll get back to the planning for Wednesday and the days and weeks ahead.

Hope your first week goes well and I'll be in touch later in the term.

Matt

Matt Allman
Headteacher
The Friary School