

24<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

This term has seen the start of the GCSE and A level examinations, and I am delighted to say that they are proceeding well, and the students are approaching them with the quiet confidence and determination that hard work brings. We could not be prouder of them; it is always heartening to be able to tell how the exam has gone by the noise level as the students arrive at the front of the school! There is nothing nicer than talking to students about their exams and sharing their relief and positivity about how they feel it has gone. Well done to them all, but also to all our parents who have quietly nagged, mopped up tears and reassured at this important time, they are in the positive place they are because of all you have done to help them.

We have had so many achievements across this term in so many areas from sport to drama and theatre, to science and Music. I hope that you have been able to share in this through our Blog. A really superb achievement has been the movement for mental health week, in which as a school we achieved over 11million steps. Year 8 managed to complete the most steps across the week, and the staff are celebrating their victory over year 12! A real team effort and some good funds raised for mental health work.

At the end of this term, we say goodbye to a long-standing member of staff, Mrs Martin, our careers adviser. Mrs Martin actually moved home and had planned to leave us in November 2023; however, she has been working with us remotely and students have continued to have careers meetings and interventions using TEAMS until we could find a suitably qualified more local careers manager. I am very grateful to Mrs Martin as this week she has led on the re-accreditation for our investors in careers award, this is something like an Ofsted inspection for Careers, I am pleased to say it all seemed to go well, but we have to wait to receive our final result after half term, we are quietly confident though. Mrs Martin will be replaced by Mrs Julie Murray also a qualified careers manager with extensive school experience next term. I am sure you will join me in wishing Mrs Martin well.

We will also be saying farewell to Mrs Newark who has been a temporary teacher in the English department, we will be joined by Ms Sarah Thomas after half term as a permanent member of the department and she joins us from another local Grammar school. I am also delighted that our new Librarian will start with us, Mrs Elizabeth Booth will be looking to develop opportunities in the library for all students, this has been a particular challenge this term as we have not had the staffing capacity to fully staff the library in the way we would have liked. I am grateful to the students for their patience and to the staff who gave up additional time so we could open it up for periods. We have also been joined this term by Mrs Katie Russell our new morning receptionist and Mrs Cowey has moved to the main office team overseeing data management in the school.

Both of our staff who have been on phased return are back to full time after half term and it has been lovely to welcome them back into school, I know that the students have been pleased to see them and have supported their return into school as much as the staff have. That for me demonstrates the excellence of the school community, the understanding shown has been hugely appreciated and please be assured that we will work hard to support students if they feel that they have gaps in their learning. We are very grateful to Mr Ekeigwe and to Mrs Stanley for their work in Technology and MFL. Miss DiLauro will not be returning to WGSG, and we wish her every success in her future plans. I am pleased that Ms Marina Raminez, a qualified MFL teacher, joins the department for term 6.

It is also pleasing to share with parents and students that we had an Audit on our safeguarding provision by an external agency this term, this was something that we commissioned. I am very pleased to share that following 2 days of review, including student interviews, observations, and quality assurance of processes in school, that we have received a glowing report of our practices and systems. It is always important with the rapidly changing issues that young people and families face to assure ourselves that we are doing the right things at the right time. My thanks to Mrs Munden, Mrs Pike, Mr Biggenden, our amazing Heads of Year and the Pastoral teams for all that they do to support all of our students and particularly our most vulnerable.

Looking towards term 6 we have our KS3 internal examinations for years 7 – 9, this is a really important opportunity for students to put into practice their learning in terms of how to revise and all of the tips and tricks that have been shared with them through class and Form time. Remember revision is about going over what you are weakest in, not just revising what you enjoy! Mr Fuller will be sharing the parental presentation and the links to support revision shortly.

Please can I remind year 10 that as part of our career's education programme, which starts in Y7 and continues throughout the whole of a student's time at WGSG., that they will have a work shadowing day on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2023. Please could all parents complete the form to confirm the work shadowing placement <https://forms.office.com/e/pLFpL8N22Y> . Further information will follow in term 6, but it is important to get this day organised as soon as you can.

We have our school production of Fame taking place on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June. Further details to follow but this is looking like another smash hit, particularly judging by the quality of singing I can hear after school from my office.

In terms of attendance, I would like to thank parents for working with us in ensuring that students are in school as much as possible, we recognise that as a parent sometimes it can be tricky to decide whether to send them into school. I am pleased to say that the Department for Education has produced a helpful guide which you can find here [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/when-should-i-worry-if-my-child-is-ill/) If you are ever in doubt or struggling then please do speak to your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year and we will support you. Can I also remind parents about requests for absence, these need to be with me at least 2 weeks prior to the absence in order for them to be authorised, unless there is an emergency situation. I am also not able to authorise any leave for holidays, as parents will be aware the government expectation on school attendance is very high, so please bear this in mind before booking holidays that are in term time.

We have decided to move to a different platform for parents/carers to make online donations to our Enriching Learning Fund using Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) website. The reason for the switch is CAF has the functionality on their website to claim Gift Aid on our behalf increasing the value of the donation we receive. The process is simple for users, you just need to tick the box 'Please Gift Aid this

donation' and if you meet the criteria then proceed. CAF will claim the Gift Aid increasing the donation by 25% meaning a £20 donation increases to £25. Our suggested donation is £50 per student per year with siblings paying £25 per year, but the value can be customised so please feel free to donate as you wish. This is the link to the WGSG page on the CAF website <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/23800>. We really appreciate the support from our families as it has allowed us to do a range of things that we are unable to use the school budget for, in the past year we have been able to further equip the school Library, buy equipment for students at break and lunch, as well as put funding towards the new sound system in the Hall. Can I thank you in advance of all the continued support in these challenging times.

Finally, in terms of our expectations of students in school I need to remind students and parents about the uniform expectations, particularly in the summer months. Students must wear their Blazers; the jumpers are the optional aspect of uniform. Shirts need to be tucked in and skirts not rolled up. Students should not be wearing trainers, and we will be taking a firm line on this after half term. If the weather becomes very warm, I will message home to say that Blazers are not needed in school. Lanyards are also essential as we have moved to having a more secure site with card access to buildings, so please make sure that all students have their ID card and lanyard each day. Thank you for your support with uniform.

I hope that we will see the sunshine over the half term, my thanks to those staff who are coming in to support with Fame rehearsals and do additional support for students. As ever, I am sure you will join me in thanking the staff for all their work this term both in and out of class.

Term 6 begins on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at normal school time and ends on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 12.00.

Kind regards



Mrs M E Lawson

Headteacher