



12 September 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to warmly welcome you back to a new academic year. I am absolutely delighted to be the new Headteacher of Plymstock School and I look forward to working with you over the coming year.

I have nothing but the highest expectations for Plymstock School. Our vision is simply to be a world-class learning community that allows all young people to succeed both now and later in life. Our students will be entering a global jobs market, competing against individuals from across the world. We need to ensure that when our students leave us they have all the skills and qualifications to achieve their goals and realise their ambitions. We believe this can only be accomplished through working together with parents. Plymstock School has seven core aims to support our vision and I would ask that you look at our website for details. In the next few weeks we will also be adding our School Improvement Plan to the website to allow all parents to see the key areas we are working on over the next few years.

Examination results

Last year we were really pleased to see that the progress made by students at Plymstock School was in the top 17% of all schools nationally, according to the Department for Education figures. As you will have heard in the press, this year there was a national fall in the GCSE pass rate, however, we are delighted to report that our students bucked the national trend and improved substantially. In all of the key school performance measures we are expecting to be significantly above the national average when the figures are published in October. We also expect the progress made by our students this year to be ranked even higher than the top 17% of all schools. This is an incredible achievement and a real testament to the team effort that exists between students, staff and parents at Plymstock School. So, on behalf of all of the staff we thank you for everything that you do to support the school.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding students is a key priority for us at Plymstock School. Each year we are required to draw the attention of parents to our safeguarding policy. This can be found on the school website via the following route: **Menu - School Information - School Policies - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**. This will tell you about potential safeguarding risks, key staff and our referrals procedure. I must also inform all parents and carers that there may be occasions where we have to make safeguarding referrals to external agencies, without parental notification. In these cases, we assure you that we are always acting in the best interests of a child's safety. This year we will be introducing a termly safeguarding newsletter to support parents with issues such as dealing with online dangers, social media etc...

We have additionally made some site security improvements over the summer through the installation of electronic gates. This is to ensure that no unauthorised visitors can enter the site and reduce potential risks to our students from traffic movement. These gates are closed between 8:45am and 2:45pm; any visitors will be required to ring the intercom system to be let in. Please also be aware that during both the morning break time (11:00-11:20am) and lunch time (1:20-1:50pm) no vehicles are allowed to move about on the site.





School finances

As with other public services, I am sure you will have seen press reports about the pressures on school budgets. Like many other schools, we too are operating with a highly restrictive budget. Our priority is to protect the existing provision for our students and to ensure that they continue to make outstanding progress. However, this means we have had to make some tough decisions and reduce expenditure in a number of back office areas. We just wanted to make all parents aware that some of the things we have done historically may not always be possible over the coming years. One way of reducing costs is through postage. This year we will be sending the majority of our letter communication with parents via email. If you have recently changed your email address, could you please let us know?



Teaching and learning

We are really pleased to have introduced the new Show My Homework package that enables parents to easily see what homework their child has been set. This is new to staff, students and yourselves. As with any new system there are bound to be small teething issues, so please bear with us over the next few weeks. Login details have now been sent to all parents.



Although the students started on Monday 5th September, the staff were in school on the 1st and 2nd. During that time the teaching staff were trained in a teaching technique called Co-operative Learning using Kagan Structures. This is a heavily researched teaching approach and all the evidence shows that it has a significantly positive impact on student learning. The benefits are that it makes learning in the classroom more challenging and engaging. Additionally, it helps build resilience, independence and inter-personal skills. This is one area that we will be prioritising our teacher development in over the year.



Parent involvement

I am very keen to increase parental involvement in school life. This term we will be launching a Parent Forum with the purpose of giving parents a genuine voice and enabling parents to contribute to school improvement. This will be led by Mrs Duff (Assistant Headteacher) and Mrs Kirk (Head of Year 7). They will make contact with parents over the coming weeks and seek volunteers to join. Last year we introduced year group learning evenings for parents, which were well received. We will continue with these over this academic year.



A number of parents from the Peverell/Mannamead area of Plymouth made enquiries with us about direct bus options. Over the summer I contacted Plymouth City Bus and Stagecoach South West. Unfortunately, a direct morning and afternoon bus is not financially viable for Plymouth City Bus. I am still waiting to hear back from Stagecoach South West and we are exploring possibilities with other private bus companies. I will of course contact parents as soon as I know more.



We would like to thank you all for supporting us with uniform. As I mentioned before the summer, I am aware that everyone has an opinion on uniform, but we do have a current set of standards which I expect all students to follow. So far, the overwhelming majority of students are dressed correctly, and for the small minority who haven't been, we have really appreciated your support.





Finally, I'd like to remind parents and carers that you do not need to wait until parents' evenings to talk to us. You can contact any member of staff to ask a question or resolve a query. The website has a staff list that will hopefully allow you to identify the correct person. It also has a 'Communicating with Plymstock School' page in the Parent Menu and a 'Contact Form'. Alternatively, you can always phone 01752 402679 and request a call back from a member of staff. Please be aware that teachers are unable to leave classrooms to take phone calls, so your patience is requested.



I would like to wish you all a great year and we look forward to building a strong and lasting relationship with you all.



Yours sincerely

Rob Diment
HEADTEACHER

