

Drapers' Academy

Principal: Mr Darren Luckhurst, BSc (Hons)
Chairman of Governors: Mr Tim Orchard, MA (Cantab)

Settle Road, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 9XR

T: 01708 371331

F: 01708 347515

E: admin@drapersacademy.com

W: www.drapersacademy.com

Dear Parents and Carers

As ever the school year begins to pick up real momentum as we approach the Easter holiday. Our Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students have been engaged in weeks of additional sessions after school and during the recent half term break in order to be best prepared for the upcoming examinations. The school is a busy place. However, holidays such as Easter give us an opportunity to reflect for a while.

Easter is a religious holiday, but some of its customs, such as Easter eggs, are said to be linked to pagan traditions. However, from a Christian perspective, Easter eggs represent Jesus' emergence from the tomb and resurrection. Decorating eggs for Easter is a tradition that dates back to at least the 13th century. In more recent times, we give chocolate eggs as gifts. On the topic of eggs, I am pleased to report that our chickens (who were born at the school last year) have begun laying. Our pupils have enjoyed many delights made with these eggs, including some scrumptious cakes. Our animal community continues to grow and we now have a tortoise, rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, tropical fish and a new resident, a corn snake named 'Lemonade'. All of our animals have proved to be popular with the pupils.

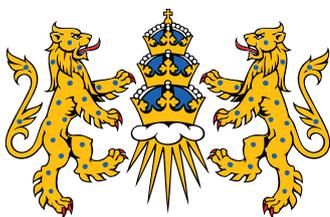
Year 11 and 6th Form

For several years in my career, I have written to parents stating that this period is stressful for pupils, students and teachers, as well as the families. However, this year I am experiencing for myself how stressful this time can be. My eldest daughter is in Year 11 and about to take her GCSE examinations. I can now empathise with parents as I realise just how you are feeling. You will be feeling lost, asking if you are doing the right thing, possibly arguing at times, worrying etc. All I can say is that we have given pupils and students plenty of revision materials (notes and revision guides) and guidance from their teachers. It is now up to the pupils to plan each week leading up to their exams.

Every Sunday I spend 20 minutes with my daughter planning her time for the week ahead. I include time for relaxation including her sporting activities. Most importantly, I check that she is completing the work we agree for her to do. That can vary from; re-writing her notes (she uses her revision guides for this), using her phone for Tassomai (Science app), laptop for Hegarty Maths, or completing past examination questions / papers. Whatever it is, I CHECK she is doing it! This routine has really helped and we will continue this right up until her last examination.

Your son/daughter has been provided with a list of dates for when their exams are. Ask them to show this to you in order to help you plan effectively as the days approach. We also have additional revision material on our school website that pupils last year found very





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useful. Many pupils have been invited in for additional sessions over Easter. If you have received a letter for any of these sessions, it is important that your child attend.

The internet has a vast array of support material to help pupils and students with their GCSEs or A Levels – therefore do not believe them if they say they have nothing to help them revise or no past exam questions to complete!

Pupil numbers for 2018

As you will be aware, we are a very popular school. I have recently received data from the local authority regarding preferences for our upcoming Year 7. We received 470 preferences and have made 210 offers for 210 places. In 2014, there were 103 pupils on roll in Year 11, from September there will be almost 180.

Behaviour

Pupil behaviour in and around school is good. Ofsted said *'the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite to visitors, show respect for the school environment and conduct themselves sensibly around the site.'* This continues to be the case

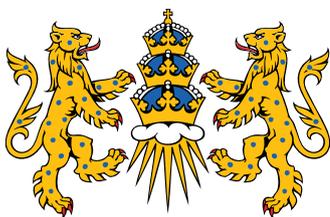
However, Ofsted also told us that our exclusion rates (fixed term and permanent) were too high, above the national average. Exclusion from school is our highest sanction and the most negative. It gives me no satisfaction when I have to make this decision. It is also a decision that is not taken lightly. However, if a pupil's behaviour puts others at risk, I will exclude and sometimes this results in a permanent exclusion. In addition, if a pupil's behaviour is having a persistent detrimental effect on the learning of others, I will consider excluding.

I am pleased to report that our instances of exclusion have decreased significantly. I have excluded 75% less pupils than at this time last year. I believe the reasons for this are; stable staffing teaching consistently good lessons, revised behaviour systems and continued support from parents. Our aim is to never exclude and we will continue to work towards this goal.

Attendance

Ofsted were also critical of the pupils' attendance. Our pastoral team have always worked to support pupils and their families. One of their roles is to assist with attendance. However, our whole school attendance data, including the numbers of pupils persistently absent (those with greater than 10% absence to school), is below the national average.





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Excellent school attendance is essential if pupils are to reach their potential. There is a direct link between high attendance, behaviour and achievement. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to remind you that we are unable to authorise any leave of absence during term time, unless it is an exceptional circumstance. This therefore includes family holidays, weddings, family birthday parties, surprise trips booked by relatives etc.

Pupils who are absent from school at the start of September will miss important learning time and start the year with a negative attendance record. This will also result in pupils becoming 'attendance focus targets' for the remainder of the year. Can I please ask for your support to ensure that any planned summer holidays or visits, take place during the school holiday period and that all pupils are ready to start school on Wednesday, 5th September, the first day of the new school year. A pupil who takes one week of holiday during school time is classified by the Department of Education as persistently absent until December. This assumes no further absence. A pupil with two weeks holiday will be a persistent absentee until after the February half term break and only if no further absence arises.

We do have an increasing number of pupils with 100% attendance and many between 98-100%. We have improved our rewards system to praise those who come to school on time and almost, if not, every day. These pupils will receive a blazer badge to wear with pride.

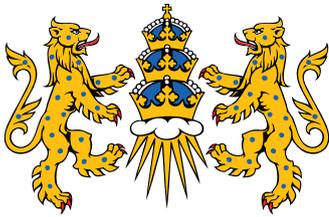
Social Media

From time to time, the school is written about in a negative way on social media, mainly on Facebook community pages. I would urge you that if you have a complaint to make sure that you follow our complaints procedure outlined on our website. This is there to support our families when things go wrong. We will then endeavour to put things right, to ensure the best possible education for your child.

Sharing your views publically can sometimes bring undue stress for other parents, as often the issues raised are concerning an individual and not widespread. I urge you to raise your issue directly with the school and not over social media. I appreciate your support with this matter.

You can write to the school directly using the following email, admin@drapersacademy.com Please include a name to address correspondence to. If you are unsure, please address it for my attention and either I will respond or I will nominate a relevant member of my team to do so on my behalf.





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I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and wish you and your family an enjoyable Easter break. The term finishes at 3.00pm this Thursday and we look forward to our pupils and students returning at the normal time of 8.30am, Monday 16th April 2018.

Best wishes

Mr D Luckhurst
Principal
Drapers' Academy
T: 01708 371331 Ext. 3227
E: slucey@drapersacademy.com



 Queen Mary
University of London