

SST/HWE

12th September 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Key Changes To The Duston School

Now that the new academic year is in motion I would like to share with you, in brief, some of the key changes that have taken place at The Duston School. You should have received an electronic copy of the changes in full detail as a PDF booklet. However, I would like to summarise some of the key points for your reference, as follows:

- **Student Care:** The approach to student care has been changed dramatically across the entire school. All students now have a new tutor, different from the one they had last year and students will have found that the personalities within their tutor group are also different. Each year group, during tutor time, is based in one corridor/faculty wing of the school and the tutors attached to a year group all come from the same faculty. Directors and Assistant Directors of Year have been placed in offices situated in the corridor/wing where their year group is based. This, in itself, should help to create a real sense of identity within each year group. There have also been changes regarding the personnel who support the students and where they are based within the school. Mr Dewes has become an Assistant Principal and oversees the whole of student care for the school.
- **Role of the Tutor:** Tutors, who students see both at the start and end of the day, play a pivotal role in supporting your son/daughter's educational experience and will stay with them as they move through their career at The Duston School, from Year 7 to Year 11. All tutors will by the end of this week have made contact with parents/guardians to introduce themselves and open up the channels of communication with you. All of your concerns/questions regarding your son/daughter's education should primarily be addressed with the tutor. Equally, tutors will be the first person to contact you regarding your son/daughter's education should the need arise.
- **Sixth Form:** Please note that the Sixth Form are now based in The Hub, giving the Sixth Form a real sense of identity and a clear and obvious high profile and professional looking base. The move to The Hub signifies how highly we value the Sixth Form. Sixth Form students have also been placed in vertical tutor groups, made up of both Year 12 and Year 13 students.
- **Year 10/11/12/13 Support:** Each of these four key year groups will have a clear programme of additional support and letters will be issued to you detailing this.
- **Detentions:** The format for detentions has changed and formalised detentions can only be set by the Director of Year or the Senior Team. Director of Year detentions will take place after school on a Thursday and Senior Team detentions on a Friday. These detentions will run from 3.15pm to 4.15pm.

Mr S Strickland – BA (Hons), MA, NPQH
Principal

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- **Break and Lunch:** Students can only consume food in one of the 3 restaurant/café areas within the school or the main school hall, which is equipped with 15 wedding breakfast style tables. Previously the hall had not been used for the consumption of food but this now provides the students with an additional space to sit and eat their lunch as opposed to having to stand in the corridors of the school. We have also introduced a one-way system within the main restaurant to ease the contra-flow of students and better manage the queues. Furthermore, we now have more members of staff on duty during break and lunch to supervise the students, with support staff now assisting as well.
- **School Day:** The format of the school day has changed as follows:
 - 08.45 – 09.00 – Tutor Time
 - 09.00 – 10.00 – Period 1
 - 10.00 – 11.00 – Period 2
 - 11.00 – 11.30 – Break
 - 11.30 – 12.30 – Period 3
 - 12.30 – 13.30 – Period 4
 - 13.30 – 14.00 – Lunch
 - 14.00 – 15.00 – Period 5
 - 15.00 – 15.10 – Tutor Time

The rationale behind this change is to give students the opportunity to meet with their tutor at the start and end of the school day and to shorten the amount of learning that takes place in the afternoon, when students inevitably become more tired.
- **House System:** Mr Beal (Assistant Principal) and the Sixth Form have championed a new 'soft House' system. Each student will be placed into one of four vertical Houses (Year 7-13) and students will have the opportunity throughout the year to compete with one another in a variety of activities, all of which are designed to create a sense of House and school identity and increase the overall sense of a Duston School community. There will also be leadership opportunities made available to students within their Houses. Each student has been issued with a House badge to iron onto their school blazer to signify which House they belong to.
- **House Points:** In addition to the House system students have the potential to now earn House points. Every time your son/daughter earns a House point an email will be sent to notify you of this. As a school we want to celebrate your son/daughter's achievements with you and communicate positive news to you as opposed to negative. At set points in the year House point totals will be accumulated and your son/daughter has the potential to be rewarded with an Amazon voucher.
- **Student Forums:** I will be meeting with representatives from each Year group every term to review the school as a whole and to take on board student views regarding how the school can continue to evolve and progress.

All of the above changes are the result of hours of discussion and communication with staff and students alike. During my first term in post as Principal I was keen to gather the views of students and staff as part of my overall consideration in positively moving the school forwards. I fully appreciate that change can be unsettling and I am not proposing to make further systemic changes this academic year, unless there is a genuine educational reason to do so. I am keen that the students of The Duston School settle into the new changes that are now in motion and see real security in the school that they come to on a daily basis.

However, I will review the effectiveness of these changes and, as with anything new, I appreciate that there may be teething issues that require consideration and ironing out. As we collectively move into 2018 I will seek to hold a series of parental forums to discuss how the school can work positively with the local community and how the local community can support the next generation of citizens that make up the Duston region.

Yours sincerely



Mr Strickland
Principal