

Meopham School

A Member of Swale Academies Trust

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Dear Parents,

As we approach the end of term, I thought that it would be timely to update you with some key developments in school.

Achievements of the Students

GCSE and A level examinations

The GCSE and A Level exam season is progressing well, and students are reporting that they feel confident about their performances in these all-important public examinations. We are projecting our best-ever set of examination results at both Key Stages 4 and 5, and I look forward to celebrating the final outcomes with the students during our results days in the summer.

Metacognition

As you will be aware from my various presentations to parents last year, we have done a lot of work at Meopham to ensure that we are empowering students to become independent learners, both at school and beyond. Metacognition is an approach aimed at helping students to think about their learning. Students are taught specific strategies to monitor, evaluate, and set goals in their own academic development. Research has shown that metacognitive approaches have consistently high levels of impact and can increase a student's progress by up to eight months. Our approach to metacognition was delivered by myself and Ms Iles in front of nearly 2000 Headteachers and Deputies from across the country and we have welcomed the opportunity to share our strategies with them further. Meopham School's very own 'Metacognition Infusion Team' focuses on four capabilities (or "muscles"):

- **Reciprocity:** Students take part in collaborative learning with the help of directed role cards.
- **Reflectiveness:** The plenary bucket enables students to reflect on their lesson and think about the actions they are going to take next.
- **Resilience:** Students use the 5Bs (Brain, Board, Book, Buddy, Boss) to work through any difficulties they might be experiencing in their learning.
- **Resourcefulness:** Learning zones have been set up in every classroom to enable students to use resources in a bid to become more independent within the classroom.

To help your children become independent, capable learners you can support the work we do with them at school with a few simple strategies set out on our handy fridge postcard. We would be grateful if you would display this somewhere prominently at home.

Literacy

The school has been busy expanding links with Istead Rise Primary School, currently being supported by our Trust. The English Department has been regularly meeting with teachers from Istead Rise to help develop mutual understanding of how to improve students' performance in English at KS2. Teachers from Meopham have been directly teaching Istead Rise students in Year 6 in the run up to their SATS exams. In the next term our students will be helping to organise and run the Istead Rise Sports Day. We will also be

working with a range of other classes to improve their literacy and numeracy. We are really excited about this opportunity for professional collaboration with Primary colleagues which will, I am sure, further improve outcomes at both our schools.

Our Literacy Focus this term has been on the use of apostrophes. We have been ensuring that students use apostrophes to show possession and to indicate contractions. Each term we have one focus for literacy across the school that helps to embed the message for our students. This year so far, we have focussed on the use of topic sentences, discourse markers, structuring sentences and using a range of punctuation marks.

School Radio

Our Sixth Form DJs continue to broadcast daily shows on the radio station at 8.30am and 12.30pm. Recently, they hosted debates on the General Election and the implications of the new parliament.

Scholastic Excellence Society

Meopham School has founded a new society whose aims are to promote the very best academic achievement among the pupil body. Pupils are invited to join based on their academic achievement throughout the year. For Years 7 to 11 the top ten pupils are invited to join, and for Sixth Form the top five from each year group. Pupils are awarded a gold badge in the form of the society's emblem: a stag's head backed by the Meopham logo. Pupils are rewarded for their hard work with a small number of privileges throughout the year including a non-school uniform day, and trips for students who belong to this society during Academy Week.

Stretch and Challenge

In addition to our focus on Metacognition we have introduced a new focus to teaching and learning, entitled Stretch and Challenge. This aims to challenge all levels of ability across all year groups in new ways. Some exemplar work has taken place in Maths and DT where Year 7 have been set GCSE questions as homework, with very positive results. Our mission is to set an early precedent as to the level of challenge that they will experience as they move through the school.

House Points and Achievement Postcards

At Meopham, we are always seeking to find new ways to celebrate every kind of success. The Scholastic Excellence Society is a new initiative to celebrate the very highest academic attainment. However, I feel that it is equally important to reward academic *progress*, as this is something that students of all abilities should be seeking to maximise. As a token of recognition, the top ten students who have made the most progress towards achieving their target grades will each receive a postcard from me at the end of term. I will also be sending out postcards, as I did just before Christmas, to the ten highest performing students in terms of House Points from each year group. House Points are given as a reward for academic success, effort, community service, good conduct, and performance in each of the Metacognition Muscles. They are, therefore, a clear measure of all-round performance.

Attendance

I am delighted to report that attendance has improved significantly this year. Our running total is 94.9% for the year. There is still more to do to meet the target of 96% that I set for the pupils at the start of the year. I really appreciate your support in helping us to achieve this. I know, as a parent myself, that a lot is done at home in the mornings to encourage students to attend school, particularly on the days when they are not feeling their best. This really is so important, and establishes a work ethic that is crucial for success in the workplace. Thank you for your efforts, and let's continue to work together on this to ensure that attendance improves even further.

Voices Around the World

Voices Around the World is a fantastic singing programme which sees young voices from across the whole world uniting to record a song called "Listen to Us". Schools from as far as China, Australia and America have been involved. Mr Knight, our Head of Music, visited local primary schools to lead the South East contingent of young voices.

Visits were made to Wrotham Road Primary School, Shorne Primary School, Tymberwood Academy School, Westcourt, Cecil Road, St. Joseph's, and Ifield School. The children were taught vocal warm ups as well as exercises which helped them to learn to sing the song confidently and clearly.

After the introductory workshop Mr Knight revisited Tymberwood Academy, with journalists and television crew present, for a fantastic final performance and recording of their version of the song.

Mr Knight said "It was an absolute pleasure to be part of Voices Around the World and let's hope we can do the same next year!"

All funds raised will go to support needy schools in Africa. For more information on this project follow the link <http://www.voicesaround.com/>

Futures Event

In April, our Sixth Formers ran a careers event for Year 10 and 11 students. Their aim was to inform and inspire students with their choices for the future and to understand the link between learning in school and the world of work. Sixth Formers were hugely successful in planning and arranging the morning, which involved over 200 students and 28 professionals from industry, including colleges, apprenticeships and the combined services. Following the event, there was a tangible buzz in the canteen and in form rooms. Thank you both to Sixth Formers and volunteers who gave their time willingly. We hope to further motivate and improve students' academic performance with future events such as these.

United Kingdom Maths Trust – Junior Challenge

On Thursday 30th April 2015 the best Maths students in Years 7 and 8 took part in a National Junior Maths Challenge. To receive a certificate, students had to be placed in the top 40% nationally. It is, therefore, very pleasing to report that our students achieved one Gold, one Silver and eight Bronze certificates. In addition Nam (Year 8) achieved a score of 108 which means he has qualified for the Junior Maths Olympiad. This is only open to the top 1200 students across the nation. All of the students who took part deserve great credit as this competition involves a very high level of Mathematics and is quite a daunting prospect for students taking it for the first time.

Academy Week – 29th June – 3rd July

We have a range of trips planned for Academy Week as follows:

Monday to Friday - Loire Valley - KS3

Monday 29th June - Lion King trip – all year groups

Tuesday 30th June - Legoland trip – Year 11 and 12

Wednesday 1st July - Year 9 Art trip to Whitstable and Scholastic Excellence trip to V&A and Natural History Museum

Thursday 2nd July - Thorpe park – Sixth Form

Thursday 2nd July - NHC - Wingham Wildlife Park

Uniform

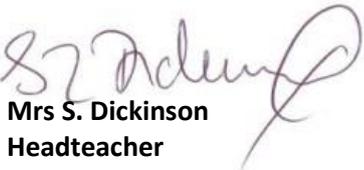
As we move into the warmer summer months, I thought it would be useful to remind you of our expectations in terms of uniform. On the whole, students at Meopham School wear their uniform with pride. The boys are smartly dressed with shirts firmly buttoned to the top, ties tied correctly with the logo just below the knot, and shirts tucked in. Formal shoes (not trainers) are worn by all. For girls, skirts are worn to the knee (or just above) with open neck fitted school blouses which are designed to be worn untucked. Jumpers, if worn, should not be tucked into skirts. The students do not need to wear their blazers in the summer term (term 6). However, if they are not worn, they should be carried over the arm. Please can I remind parents that Meopham School branded uniform should only be purchased from The Sewing Shop (Echo Square, Gravesend) or Longfield Wools (located in the St George's Centre, Gravesend). Please be warned that there are a number of other outlets in Gravesend who also claim to stock our official uniform. These stockists are not official suppliers of our uniform. There have been a number of issues with the quality of clothing purchased there. Please can I urge you to only buy Meopham branded uniform from The Sewing Shop or Longfield Wools.

Clean conduct cards

Well done to the two students drawn from the clean conduct card raffle this term, each winning a £10 Bluewater voucher. They are Lily-Rose in 8H, and Helen in 7R.

I would finally like to wish all students, staff, parents and carers best wishes for a restful half term break.

Yours faithfully



Mrs S. Dickinson
Headteacher