

Meopham School

A Member of Swale Academies Trust

Headteacher: Mr E Roberts BA Hons. PGCE NPQH



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Dear parents and carers,

I hope you've had a lovely week and are looking forward to the Christmas break! I think it's fair to say that - after a lot of hard work - all of our students and staff have earned a well-deserved break, where they get a moment to relax and spend quality time with friends and family.

Well Done

Congratulations to the following students who received Headteacher Commendations this week:

Beth B (Y8) - **Community** - Representing the school by singing at the Carols on the Green

Theo H (Y10) - **Community** - Representing the school by reading at the Carols on the Green

Jack T (Y9) - **Music** - Excellent Film Music Composition

Taylor O (Y9) - **Music** - Excellent Film Music Composition

Congratulations also to **Mr Whitnell** who has been appointed as our new **Head of Science** and to **Mr Alldridge** who becomes our **Second in Charge of Science** with responsibility for Key Stage Four. Both are long-standing members of staff and we know they are going to do a fantastic job in their new leadership positions.

Congratulations also to **Mrs Webb** who will be joining our Windmill provision as a full-time Teaching Assistant.

A huge **well done** to all students who received awards and prizes as part of the **Head of Year Awards Assemblies**. Each subject nominated a student who had shown excellent effort in their lessons, and there were also prizes for students with the most house points, the highest attendance and to recognise individual outstanding achievement. It was great to celebrate so many students who turn up each day and give their very best in everything they do.

A huge **well done** to all of our Year 10s, Year 11s, Year 12s and Year 13s who have sat mock exams or other assessments over the past term. Exams are never easy but we are very proud of all of our students' hard work and tenacity. You have earned a well-deserved break over Christmas!

Well done also to a number of our Sixth Formers who have also taken on some part-time work as part of the cleaning staff at school. Gaining the experience of a part-time job - appropriately balanced with the demands of study and of course time to socialise - is an important step in students' development into the adult world, and we've always found our Sixth Formers like the opportunity to earn a wage in a working environment where they feel comfortable. If any other Sixth Formers are interested in taking up a role, they can email diane.mills@swale.at to be considered.

Cultural Capital

Our thanks to **Miss Alger** who organised a trip for our Y12 Sociology and Criminology trip to the Serial Killer Exhibition at the Banksy Tunnel at Leake Street Arches, Waterloo. Not the most Christmasy of events but certainly memorable!

Christmas Lunch and Christmas Jumper Day

It was great to see students and staff get into the Christmas spirit during our Christmas Lunch on Wednesday, with plenty of Christmas music to accompany the afternoon. (I didn't know half the songs but the students seemed to. Bring back Wizzard and Slade I say!) Lots of students were also very excited today to don their Christmas jumpers - probably not for the last time over the next week I'm guessing! Thanks to our catering team **Cucina** for preparing all the food and to **Ms Trueman** and **Mrs Wrighton** for helping serve up meals for everyone!

Sixth Form - a message from Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Romney

Parents of Sixth Form students received a letter this week regarding the updated expectations for students from January. We had lots of questions regarding driving lessons.

We support students in completing driving lessons as we feel this is an important part of their development.

If students would like to book driving lessons during their study periods they need to provide written confirmation of the date(s) and times of the lessons, and we will then authorise these.

Year 11 Students - Period 7

Next term, teachers are offering additional Period 7 intervention for Y11 students who require support in the run up to their GCSE and Level 2 exams. Parents/carers of Y11 students should check the letter from Mr Rigglesworth detailing which Period 7 lessons your child has been assigned to. Students will also receive a new timetable in school, detailing the Period 7 lessons.

Lates

From January we will be focusing on improving punctuality to school and to lessons, for those who are not yet getting this right. We will be phasing this new approach in gradually, with plenty of information provided to students beforehand.

Punctuality is an important life skill, with clear links to our school values of respect and excellence. It is also imperative to maximise learning opportunities and ensures students are able to reach their potential.

Students must be in school and ready to learn before the start of the school day at 8.40am (except Y11 who start at 8.30am). They have five minutes to move between classrooms at the changeover of lessons. We will be tracking where these expectations are not met, and later in the term we will be applying sanctions where required. There will also be a prize draw in assembly each week for students with 100% attendance!

Change to Policy on Mobile Phones

A reminder that, throughout January, we will be changing our policy on mobile phones, which will include other devices such as earbuds, smartwatches, MP3 players, headphones, iPads and tablets.

We are doing this for three reasons:

1. **The Department for Education (DfE) has directed all schools to bring in a phone ban.**
2. **We want to improve students' social skills and wellbeing.** DfE research showed that 44% of parents are concerned about the amount of time their children spend on electronic devices.
3. **We want to reduce bullying and unkind behaviour.** There is now overwhelming research from many countries about the negative impact of the excessive use of social media - both on student wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Students will be able to use their phones on the journey to and from school, however there will be an expectation that phones are turned off and put away in bags when students enter the school site.

Should students be seen with their phone on school site, the phone will be confiscated until the end of the school day and the student will receive a 30-minute after-school (C4) detention. The student's phone will be locked away securely. Parents/carers will be alerted of the detention, which will be sat the same day (unless the parent/carer requests for the detention to be rescheduled to the next day).

After the student has sat their detention, they will have their phone returned. (If the parent/carer has rescheduled the detention, the student will need to hand in their phone at the start of the school day on which they have scheduled to sit the detention).

If a student refuses to hand over their phone when asked, they will be placed in the Student Support Provision (SSP) until they do so. Furthermore, if this continues to be an issue, selected students will be required to hand their phones into Reception at the beginning of each school day and parents/carers will be required to collect the phones at the end of the school day.

We know that some students will find this change challenging, and we will be supporting students through this process.

1. Students who require their phones for medical needs - such as diabetes - will be allowed to use their phones and be given a pass.
2. Students who have an issue at home or anxiety, and wish to contact their parent/carer at Breaktime or Lunch, will be allowed to do so in specific, dedicated areas under teacher supervision.
3. The Meopham Safe Text number will still be contactable before or after school, and a new message box has been installed outside the Safeguarding Office where any student can post a concern whenever they wish..

Upon reflection, we will phase this change in over time to ensure students are able to get accustomed to this new rule. We may be flexible with the exact timings when each new phase is introduced to ensure this transition is successful. The four phases are:

- Early in the term, we will be reminding students of the new rule on phones that will soon be in place.

- Then, we will have some practice “phone free” days.
- Next, we will bring in the new phone policy, but initially we will not sanction students for having their phones out in school; we will simply confiscate the phone if seen.
- Finally, we will implement the new phone policy in its entirety, including sanctions for those students who do not adhere to the new rules.

This change in the mobile phone policy will ensure we have a happier, healthier school where students have all of the concerns that phones and social media can cause removed. Students will have the freedom from their phones to enjoy their childhood during their school days and engage in more meaningful and sociable activities with their peers. In the long-term, we are sure this will have a hugely positive impact on our young people, whose wellbeing is always at the heart of what we do.

We appreciate your support with this process.

Additional Guidance on Uniform

Thank you to all those families who have already ensured that students are wearing skirts or trousers in line with the school's uniform policy.

Over the past two weeks - in order to support students - we adopted a short-term policy where students could carry a blue slip to outline that they are currently in the process of purchasing a new skirt or trousers.

However, **from Tuesday 7th January**, we will pursue our originally intended process, as we have outlined over the past few months:

- Should staff feel that a student's skirt is not an appropriate length, one of the following options will be available to students:
 1. Students can rectify the issue with the length of the skirt themselves if they can e.g. if the skirt has been rolled up.
 2. Parents/carers can collect their child from school, take them home to change into appropriate uniform and then return them to school.
 3. Students can borrow spare skirts or trousers from the school uniform store. **We have now purchased a number of skirts and trousers in a wide range of sizes. The skirts we have purchased are from Marks and Spencer, are an appropriate length and have an adjustable waist to ensure student comfort.**

Students who wish to wear skirts should ensure that they are knee length. Upon feedback, we do recognise that body types do vary, and there are a small number of students who may struggle to find a skirt that reaches the knee. If this is the case, **as long as a student purchases a 22 inch length skirt, this is acceptable** as the student is adhering to the school uniform policy as closely as possible. Of course, many students may be able to wear skirts which are less than 22 inch in length, providing they reach the knee.

To clarify, the two skirt options are: a) reaches the knee or b) 22 inches in length.

Links to skirts

Marks and Spencer offer the following skirt in a range of sizes. The skirt is an appropriate length and has an adjustable waist. It has been specially designed to support students with sensory issues. It retails between £9-14:

<https://www.marksandspencer.com/girls-adaptive-skirt/p/clp60104235?color=BLACK>

Monkouse also offer 22 inch length skirts in a range of waist sizes. Students with smaller waist sizes may be able to wear a 20 inch length skirt, if it is knee-length:

<https://www.monkhouse.com/banner-designer-pleated-skirt-bk>

Links to trousers

For many students, trousers are a good alternative option, particularly in the winter months. We have outlined below a range of suggested options:

https://www.marksandspencer.com/2pk-girls-regular-leg-stain-resist-trousers-2-18-yrs-/p/clp60650730?color=BLACK#intid=pid_pg1pip36g4r6c1

<https://direct.asda.com/george/school/trousers/senior-girls-black-tapered-leg-school-trousers/GE M1121687,default,pd.html?cgid=D10M2G1C21>

<https://www.matalan.co.uk/childrens-clothing/girls-black-slim-fit-school-trousers-3-16yrs/14515570.html>

<https://tuclouthing.sainsburys.co.uk/product/tuc135276936>

Any families in financial difficulty will always be provided support with uniform by the school. If this is the case, please email hannah.davieslane@swale.at

We thank you for your support in ensuring that all students are following the school's uniform policy. It has been really great to see all the improvements students have made to uniform over these two terms, and has helped create a smarter and more professional learning environment. Thank you all for your support with this.

Should you wish to read our uniform policy, it can be found here:

<https://www.meophamschool.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=350&type=pdf>

2025-26 Term Dates

Term dates for 2025-26 have now been confirmed. They can be found on our website [here](#).

A summary overview document can also be found on our website [here](#).

The key change for next academic year is that, in October, there will be a **two-week half-term break** between Monday 20th October 2025 and Friday 31st October 2025. This should offer a little more respite for students and staff over the very long Autumn terms.

Moving Forward Next Term

A reminder that the first day of Term 3 for students will be **Tuesday 7th January**, as on the Monday we have a Staff Development Day - so students get to enjoy one extra day of the Christmas break! On that Tuesday, students will spend Tutor Time, Period 1 and Period 2 with their Tutors.

Furthermore, a reminder that the new school day will run as follows:

Tutor Period: 8.40am-9.00am (Y11 8.30am-9.00am)

Assembly Day: line up on playground and register in Tutors

Period 1: 9.00am-9.50am

Period 2: 9.50am-10.40am

Break: 10.40am-11.00am

Period 3: 11.00am-11.50am

Period 4: 11.50am-12.40pm

Lunch: 12.40pm-1.30pm

Dining Hall: Y7, Y8, Sixth Form: 12.40pm-1.03pm (**Hatch:** Y9-11)

Whistle and change-over: 1.03pm-1.08pm

Dining Hall: Y9-11: 1.08pm-1.30pm (**Hatch:** Y7, Y8, Sixth Form)

Period 5: 1.30pm-2.20pm

Period 6: 2.20pm-3.10pm

Period 7 (selected Y11s only): 3.10pm-4.10pm

As the term draws to an end, we would like to thank you all for your continued support and partnership. It has been a pleasure getting to know our school community better and we cannot wait to go on with all the great things we have in store for next year. For now, however, we hope you all have time over the Christmas season to rest, have fun and enjoy some quality time with friends and family.

We wish you all a restful and pleasant Christmas and a very happy new year.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Roberts
Headteacher