

Meopham School

A Member of Swale Academies Trust

Headteacher: Mr E Roberts BA Hons. PGCE NPQH



Wrotham Road Meopham Kent DA13 0AH

Tel: 01474 814646

Website: www.meophamschool.org.uk

4th October 2024

Dear parents and carers,

I hope this letter finds you well.

We've had another productive week at Meopham School with lots of success and achievements to celebrate. My highlight was probably reading through this year's first edition of the Meopham Monthly. I was suitably grilled by some of the magazine's journalists last week - but the students were very kind in their write-up! You can access the magazine here:

<https://www.meophamschool.org.uk/page/?title=Meopham+Monthly&pid=233>

A huge well done to our Year 7 girls football team who defeated Tonbridge Grammar School 4-2 this week. Also congratulations to our Year 8 boys football team who beat the Malling School 1-0: well done to Mohammed S who scored the winning goal!

(Our Year 9 girls also had a superb 14-0 win against St. John Fisher School - a few weeks ago but I'm sure you'll agree it's worth a mention!)

A huge well done to the following students who have also received Headteacher Commendations over the previous week:

Leo A - Maths / History

Georgia W - Maths / History

Oli MW - Maths

Zach O - English

Lola K - Geography

Henry S - Geography

Harry P - English

There were also other students that received Headteacher Commendations. We were unable to record their names, well done to these students too.

A reminder that we have our meophamgoodnews@swale.at email for anyone who wishes to share some good news from across our community or any impressive achievements from our youngsters!

Open Evening

A big thank you to all students supporting our Open Evening next Thursday. We know they are going to do the school proud. Please do let any of your friends or family who may have youngsters approaching secondary school age that we would love to see them on the night!

We also have a number of Open Morning tours taking place from 14th - 24th October. This is a great opportunity to see the school in action during the day. Places on these tours can be booked here: [Meopham School - Open Morning Tours 2024](#).

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Meetings

A polite reminder that parents and carers should request a scheduled meeting should they wish to speak with members of staff. The large majority of staff have strict schedules - largely dominated by being in lessons with students - and as such it is not possible for us to facilitate impromptu meetings or phone calls.

Should you wish to contact a member of our team, please use our communication portal at <https://sites.google.com/swale.at/msscsm/home> and someone will be in touch.

A reminder that there are still dates when, should you wish, you can book a 30-minute meeting with myself this month:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd04f88NNbBH9qilXBtXM0ZZewKcVdmpK8cUjLTrkLOVe_g/viewform?usp=sf_link

Uniform

As we approach the winter months, a clarification that boots are not permitted as part of the school uniform. As our uniform policy states footwear should, 'black leather, or vegan alternative, school shoes.' This does not include boots. Any students who wear boots to school will be asked to change into the wide collection of spare shoes we have available, or they can ask someone from home to drop appropriate shoes off at school.

Resilience

As I mentioned in my letter last week, we have recently updated our processes regarding students leaving lessons. This has been shared with students in assemblies so all are aware. In essence, there should only be very strict circumstances in which a student is permitted to leave lessons. This is to ensure: a) all of our students are safe and accounted for and b) we maximise students' time in lessons, learning with their teachers.

Some may question why we have tightened rules. This is because I want staff to be focused on supporting students' education, not searching for students who have left lessons.

Some may question why we have changed the rules around passes to leave lessons, or indeed removed passes from some students. This is because the old process was not sensible: approximately 200 students - 20% of the school population - had a pass to leave lessons. That is neither manageable nor necessary. Rest assured, our new process ensures students who genuinely require support will still receive support, but instead of making their own way to a different part of the school building, we will ensure support comes to them, meaning we know their whereabouts, can ensure their safety and they do not miss out on additional learning time moving from one part of the building to another.

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And yes, there are stricter rules around using the toilets during lesson, but none which I think are unreasonable:

- Students should only leave a lesson to use the toilet in a genuine emergency (unless they have a Toilet Pass due to a medical condition).
- Students should not turn up late to lessons because they went to the toilet; they should always register first (to ensure all students are accounted for).
- One student to leave a classroom at a time.
- Students do not go to the toilet in the first/last ten minutes of a lesson (as they have an opportunity to visit the toilet every 50 minutes anyway and the start and end of lessons are crucial for introducing/wrapping up a topic; when students miss this, it is disruptive for other students when they return).
- Students must hand in their phone before leaving the classroom (to prevent their use in the toilets).
- Uniform must be perfect before leaving the classroom.
- Students must have a yellow lanyard with them when leaving the lesson (so staff know they have permission).
- Students should use the toilets on the same floor as their lesson (to avoid wandering).
- Students have an opportunity to use the bathroom every 50 minutes.

This doesn't deny any student the use of the toilet when they really need it, but it is a sensible policy to minimise the impact of learning lost due to students leaving lessons. Please support us with this.

Of course, this is just one aspect of school life where we hope to make improvements. Some parents/carers in their responses to our survey have particularly raised concerns about skirts and phones. You are spot on in both. Some students' skirts are too short at the moment and this needs to be addressed. Mobile phones cause issues in schools and they will be being banned during the school day. More details will follow on both, but rest assured we have plans to address these areas. We are simply making sure we deal with aspects of the school that need improving in manageable phases. It would be proactive, however, to begin having discussions with your children about skirt length and what is appropriate now, as we will be enforcing clear rules and processes on this soon.

Sixth Form Open Evening

Year 11 families will want to take note of some significant dates in the coming months.

Meopham Sixth Form Open Evening takes place on **Wednesday 13th November from 4pm to 7pm** and is a must visit for any student considering a school-based pathway after GCSEs. Small class sizes, an array of academic and vocational options with teachers that already know your children are just some of the advantages a place at Meopham Sixth Form will offer. We have

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recently taken a survey of all Year 11 students to find out what courses they wish to pursue post-16 so that we can provide a specific curriculum tailored to our students' future aspirations.

For students that are considering a college pathway, North Kent College open days have recently been published as follows: Gravesend campus - 17th October, Dartford Campus - 15th October, Tonbridge Campus - 5th November.

We would urge all Year 11s to carefully consider their post-16 educational journey and start visiting local providers to educate themselves on the exciting opportunities that are available to them.

Car Park

As I hope all will appreciate, at Meopham School our priority is your child's safety. Having monitored the routine at the end of the day several times now, we have taken the decision that all parents and carers will be required to pick students up from the designated pick up car park (on the left as you turn into the school). Parents and carers will not be able to collect students from the staff car park, unless there is a medical reason. If this is the case, please email david.mcquillan@swale.at with the reason and your car registration number. The turning into the staff car park will be blocked off from next week.

This will ensure that there is a clear, safe route for students to walk out of school, which staff can supervise. Whilst we appreciate collecting students from the staff car park can be quicker for some, it is imperative we minimise any risk to student safety. Thank you for your understanding.

Moving Forward

A huge thank you to the 108 parents and carers who responded to our recent survey. We've received some really invaluable feedback and I will be sharing our response to your feedback next week. We appreciate your participation in the important process of developing our School Improvement Plan, and we will now be sending out a survey to all of our students, in order to gain their viewpoint too.

I always look forward to Open Evenings. It is a great opportunity to get to know our local community better and is always a proud moment when I get to see how maturely and professionally our young people can speak with members of the public. Walking around the school building, there are always so many fantastic activities going on and it's a real pleasure to see our young people engaged in their learning and passionate about their subjects. We're really looking forward to demonstrating just how fantastic our school is.

With that in mind, I'll leave you with our new video that promotes all the amazing things that go on around our school every day. Alright, I cringe a little bit every time I appear speaking down-camera, but I love how well the filmmakers have caught the natural enthusiasm, energy

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and community-spirit of all of our young people as they go about a typical day at Meopham. I hope for many more days like this.

[LINK TO NEW PROMOTIONAL VIDEO HERE](#)

Have a lovely weekend

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E Roberts', written over a horizontal line.

Mr Roberts
Headteacher