



Winterton Community Academy

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Headteacher – Mr K Rowlands

27th May, 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is hard to believe that we are now at the final half-term break before the end of the academic year.

On reflection, there is a great deal to be proud of and looking back, the COVID disruptions we experienced in the first term seem something of a distant memory.

Our students have responded fantastically well throughout the year and visitors to the school always express a real sense of calm, positivity and often comment on how focussed and hard-working our students are.

That is of course, nothing less than we would expect and it does not happen by accident. We have (and continue to) work hard to build the right culture and ethos in the school. We firmly believe that we get the balance right between having high standards and expectations, and building positive relationships and taking a supportive and inclusive approach with our students; although sometimes that does also require some 'tough-love'. We have across the past four years enjoyed academic success and can demonstrate that our outcomes are amongst the best in the authority. We are equally proud however of the fact that we are highly inclusive and supportive of our students, demonstrated by the fact that our fixed-term exclusion rate is the lowest in the authority. Being inclusive however does not mean letting our students get away with it or lowering our expectations of them, to do that would be to fail them. So, we appreciate that students will not always like the fact that there are boundaries in place, that they are given consequences or challenged on the decisions that they take or that we uphold our standards and values: but it is absolutely critical that we do so. Without those boundaries, the school cannot be the calm, safe and purposeful environment that it is.

I ask respectfully that our parents and carers support us when there is a need to challenge. I appreciate that from your perspective this may sometimes feel petty or unnecessary, however, the reality is that those little things are really important and if left unaddressed and amplified by five hundred students, become an unnecessary distraction from what we are trying to achieve. There seems to be an increasing trend recently for some parents to challenge the school over the issuing of a detention or because they might disagree with an aspect of our expectations. This is really counter-productive and only serves to undermine the ethos of the school. I respect that by allowing your child to attend our school you are placing your trust in us to get things right, I greatly appreciate that trust and can say without any hesitation that we only ever want what is best for our students, and it is our responsibility to uphold our standards and expectations. That said, around 90% of our student population have never received a detention. However, if your child does receive this as a consequence, please support us and think carefully before contacting the school to contest this.

In terms of contacting the school, I sometimes receive feedback to say that it is difficult to speak to some staff members, including myself. I want us to work harder to improve this because I firmly believe that we should be here to serve you and work in partnership to help

your child succeed in our school. Given the context of the school day and the fact that most staff will be working with children throughout the day, the most effective method of communication is by email. You can email any member of staff using the following approach Surname.initial@wintertonca.com so for example my email address is Rowlands.K@wintertonca.com . It is our commitment to try and respond where possible within 24 hours. If you do need to contact me, then I would encourage you to email me directly in the first instance and in the majority of cases, I will be able to respond on the same day. I may not always be the best person to speak to, however I will be able to help establish what needs to be done and ensure that we are here to help. It is important to us that we are working closely with you and that we are transparent in our approach. We may not always agree, and we will sometimes get things wrong, but I am committed to ensuring that we are available to speak to and to work with you.

I would like to briefly mention the situation with regards to holiday requests and absence of leave requests. We have this year received an inordinately high number of requests due to a whole range of circumstances often linked to COVID-19. Whilst there is a pressure and an expectation on the school to manage attendance, I have not refused any requests this year. There are a number of reasons for this, but not least because, given the context of the last few years, I do not feel it is for me to take that decision, it is up to you to do what is right for you and your family. However, moving forward, we must return to normal and the importance of having good attendance in school is of course evident. Therefore, from September, we can no longer accept circumstances caused as a result of the pandemic as a valid reason for a leave of absence. Please do all that you can to support good attendance in school, the correlation between attendance and progress is absolute and those with good attendance (96%+) throughout their school years are more likely to achieve well in year 11.

Finally, if you do not follow our social media account on Twitter, I would encourage you to do so. So many great things happen in and around school and this is our easiest way of sharing those things. We continue to enjoy a range of sporting successes including our Year 7 boys football team competing in the cup final and our Year 9 cricket team has now reached the third round of the Joe Root Cup. We have a school full of talented young people and social media is a great way for us to celebrate those successes.

We are also delighted to have recently launched the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme to our Year 9 students and will follow this up for Year 8 in the Autumn.

Good luck to our Year 11 students as they continue with their GCSE examinations; they have worked exceptionally hard this year, they deserve to be successful and I am sure they will be.

Have a lovely half-term and thank you as always for your support.

Mr Rowlands

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K Rowlands', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr Rowlands