



Winterton Community Academy

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Headteacher – Mr K Rowlands

Ref: KR/ AW/ update

10th October, 2023

Dear parents / carers,

As we are well under way into the new Academic year, I thought it would be a good opportunity to write to you and to share some of the changes and developments that we have made to our school operations.

Homework

With regards to the setting of homework, you will no doubt be aware that we are now ensuring that all homework set, is recorded online via our app. Whilst we have experienced some initial teething problems in getting this to be fully operational, I hope that by now, both you and our students are finding this system to be an effective and efficient way to set and record homework.

In addition, we have made some amendments to our homework policy which we feel is a more supportive approach for parents and students.

Notably, we do not prescribe a weekly amount of homework within any given subject. Each subject is encouraged to set homework as and when it is appropriate to do so, in line with their curriculum planning. Where homework is set, it should be meaningful and specifically designed to develop our students' ability to work independently.

Perhaps the most significant change is that there will not be a consequence for a failure to complete homework, so to that extent, it is optional. We want our students to value their learning and to complete their homework and because they know and understand that it will benefit them to do so. Of course, we would like them therefore to complete their homework and we hope that parents too will encourage them to do so. So far this term, it would seem that more students are completing tasks in their own time as a result and certainly, there has not been a decline.

We feel it is counter-productive to spend time chasing students and applying consequences for failure to complete their homework and there is no evidence to suggest that by doing so it increases the chance of it being completed.

I encourage you to monitor weekly the homework that is set and have dialogue with your child around how much they are completing. We will also have a record of this and can discuss it in further detail at open evening events.

Detentions

As of the start of this term, we have changed our detention system and students are now expected to complete their detention during lunchtime. This decision was taken, partly as a result of feedback from parents where after-school detentions were difficult to enforce and could also cause problems for families due to the logistics of transport etc. We have so far

found this new approach to be working well with very few escalations required as a result of a 'no-show'. It is important that detentions are successfully implemented in school as I am sure you appreciate that it is necessary to have some boundaries and consequences in place. If a student fails their detention as a result of poor conduct during that detention, then this will be escalated into a period of isolation in the junction. Again, it is important that our students understand the boundaries and expectations that are in place and that a failure to respect those will result in a more severe consequence. I ask that if your child has been given a detention, that you support us in upholding that expectation. We are committed to working closely with you as parents and carers and it is important that we uphold high standards of behaviour in school at all times.

Target Setting

When setting targets for our students, we use the baseline data that is available to us, where possible this is the SATs data from KS2. You may also be aware that we use Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS) to support us further and enable us to gain a broader understanding of each individual pupil. We then set our student targets to be within the highest 20% of students nationally, using a nationally recognised formula. Whilst these targets are therefore ambitious, they remain as a minimum aspiration and they can be negotiated upwards on the agreement of the student and their teacher. Where SATS data is not available due to those students not taking their SATs during the COVID pandemic, we set their targets using our CATS data in much the same way. Again, these are minimum expectations based on historic data of how other students have performed nationally, we are therefore happy to negotiate and adjust them upwards if that is appropriate.

High expectations

We maintain the same standards and expectations of our students in terms of the three values within the school. They are Respect, Hard-Work and Positivity. These are a minimum expectation in school and we ask that as parents you support us in upholding these standards and intervening where it is necessary to do so. We cannot thrive as a successful school if we are to allow students to display a lack of respect, to be rude or defiant towards members of staff. Such conduct will be challenged and held to account. Likewise, with regards to hard-work. We expect your child to attend school and to work hard in every lesson. We need your support to make this happen and I ask that you share our ambition for your child and place the same expectations on them. Too often we have students turning up for school without any equipment, whilst we always do what we can to support them, we are not really helping them to take responsibility for themselves when we do. It is important that they are ready to learn and that means having the right equipment as well as the right attitude.

Toilets

I have written to you many times with reference to the use of toilets during the day. As a school, we again make every attempt to be respectful and supportive and that means that at the teachers' discretion, we will ordinarily allow our students to leave the lesson and go to the toilet. With 5-minute intervals between lessons, break and lunch, there should be more than sufficient time for students to use the facilities and therefore, going during a lesson should be an exception rather than the norm. Unfortunately, a number of our students attempt to take advantage of this and use it as an opportunity to leave their lesson, sometimes, 3,4 or even 5 times a day. I have advised our teachers that it is at their discretion and should only be at an appropriate time. I would not, for example, expect a student to leave

within the last 15 minutes except under exceptional circumstances. We do not expect to be challenged or confronted when we ask a student if they can wait. Some schools have a blanket ban on going to the toilet during lessons. That feels draconian and isn't the culture that we are aiming to create here, however, please can you support us in setting a reasonable expectation with your children, that leaving a lesson should be an exception.

We have created a warm, supportive school environment here at Winterton and it is one that we are very proud of. We want to be the best and provide the best for your children and it is a shame when these little things become barriers to the work that we are doing, we really do appreciate your support therefore in working with us to help your child get it right.

Finally, we are proud to share with you some of the recent success that we have enjoyed.

In the summer, the percentage of students leaving Winterton with a standard pass in Maths and English was the highest within the local authority. This is a fantastic achievement and I would like to thank all of our staff and of course the students for making this possible. In addition, we have recorded a positive progress 8 score, meaning that on average, our student progress across their range of subjects was higher than expected. We have recorded the highest attendance figures in authority and we are also amongst the lowest for recorded suspensions and exclusions. A reflection of the positive school that we have become.

I appreciate that we may not always get things right or that you may not always agree with our decisions but ultimately, we are here to ensure that all children within our school are receiving a good deal and as our mission states, are safe, happy and successful. We can demonstrate that we are succeeding in fulfilling that ambition and ensuring that the reputation of Winterton Community Academy continues to grow.

Thank you for all of your support and faith in the work that we do, it is a privilege to work with your children and you should be proud of all that they achieve.

Kind regards,

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

Mr Rowlands