



15 October 2018

Dear Parent or Carer

It has been a very busy but productive half-term and I wanted to write to you with an update, and also some reminders of the key events which are coming up. This is a long letter, with a lot of information in, so I have indicated, at the start of each section, which year group the information relates to, to allow you to go to the sections which are relevant to you.

Extra-curricular provision (*all year groups*)

The next half term will see a further development of our extra-curricular provision at both lunch-time and after school. Within the arts there are plans for a photography club, debating in Year 9, plus the return of Framda, our drama club, on Tuesday after school. The fencing club, which also took place last year, is back with a limited number of places for students to sample this exciting sport. In STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), the Future Business Magnates will be launched in Year 8, while our STEM club will be available for students from Years 7 to 10 on a Thursday after school.

The extra-curricular programme is updated on our website every half term (please look at the Student Life section), although the students are made aware of the various opportunities within weekly STEP slides each Friday. Students who are consistent participants in our many lunchtime clubs can apply for an early lunch pass from the teacher in charge. If you have any questions, please contact Mr Ward, the Assistant Head Teacher who has oversight of the provision in school at ward.f@framdurham.com

Enrichment Week 2019 (*Years 7-9*)

As part of our drive to develop the enrichment experiences of our students, we are launching an Enrichment Week in the penultimate week of the summer term; from **Monday 8th to Friday 12th July 2019**. The purpose of the week is to broaden our students' education; develop skills in organisation, leadership and problem solving, while also enhancing their appreciation of the local community and other cultures.

Students will be provided with a booklet of the activities on offer in assembly, from which they will be expected to discuss with you their options, before choosing three preferences. These should be handed into student reception by **Friday 2nd November 2018**. We will endeavour to give as many students as possible their first-choice activity; however please make sure that second and third choices are carefully considered. There are varying costs for all the activities but if your child is eligible for free school meals, the school will be able to provide some financial assistance. Once again, if you have any questions please email Mr Ward (Assistant Head Teacher) at ward.f@framdurham.com.

Careers education (*Years 8-10*)

In July 2018, we were informed that our application to be one of 40 secondary schools in the North East, making up the "North-East Ambition: Careers Hub", was accepted. This is a very exciting time in careers education and I am delighted that we are playing a leading role in the region.

The next half term will also see key year groups begin to explore different aspects of their careers education. In Year 8, students will investigate their interests, skills and the local job market in preparation for their option choices in the new year.

In Year 9, we will be launching the students' "Learning Journal", an exciting new initiative designed to document their careers journey through to Year 11. To support this process, we would invite Year 9 parents to an information Evening on **Tuesday 13th November** (more details to come in an additional letter).

In Year 10, we intend to facilitate work experience for the first time in a number of years. This will take place during Enrichment Week (8th-12th July 2019). To help parents understand this process, we intend to hold an information evening on **Thursday 15th November 2018** (more details to come in an additional letter).

Planners and rewards (Years 7-11)

In September, we issued your child with a planner which they must bring to every lesson, every day. The planner allows students to record homework and other deadlines, and to organise their time effectively. It is also used by teachers every lesson to record merits/stamps which form the basis of our new rewards system. We are delighted with how this system has been working. Students accumulate merits for their effort and engagement in lessons. These are counted each week and lead to rewards or recognition at the end of each half-term, term and year. Those of you who attended our awards ceremonies this year will have seen the powerful motivational effect of rewarding and recognising student achievement. Finally, the planner will be another way for parents to communicate with tutors. We would ask that you check your child's planner each week. Immediately after half-term, the first set of certificates will be awarded for the stamps collected to date, and students will continue to accumulate these as the year goes on.

	Stamps
Bronze Certificate	250
Silver Certificate	500
Gold Certificate	750
Platinum Certificate	1000
Badge 1 (for blazer)	1500
Badge 2 (for blazer)	2000
Badge 3 (for blazer)	2500
Badge 4 (for blazer)	3000

Assessment and Reporting (Years 7-11)

As I wrote in the summer, we are making a number of significant changes to our assessment and reporting systems this year. For parents whose children attended the school last year, the most noticeable change is that we will no longer collect or report a "working at" grade.

From September, we split the curriculum into teaching blocks (of 8-10 weeks each). There will be a classroom-based assessment at the end of each teaching block, in each subject, and we will report on the percentage students achieved in that assessment, and how that compares with the average for the cohort. We will also report on whether a student is progressing in relation to other students, from where they started. There will be some variations on this, depending on year group, with Key Stage 3 following the system outlined above; GCSE target grades and predictions will be issued to students from midway through Year 10 and on all subsequent reports.

The first classroom-based assessments in all subjects will take place in w/c 29th October (sixth form), w/c 5th November (Year 11), w/c 19th November (Years 9 and 10), and w/c 3rd December (Years 7 and 8). Advice and guidance will be provided by subject teachers on how best to prepare. Further information will be provided when reports are issued to parents.

Uniform (*Years 7-11, particularly those wearing the new uniform*)

We are delighted with our new uniform and its implementation, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support with the changes. We are committed to reviewing the implementation, and policy, and working with parents and students to make any necessary changes for the start of next year. The issues which we will be considering are:

- Pullovers/jumpers; our policy is that these will be compulsory during the winter months (starting straight after half-term). A small number of parents have said that they are concerned that their child will be too hot, wearing both jumper and blazer, so we **won't** penalise students or issue sanctions to those not wearing jumpers, and we will monitor the situation before making a final decision about this rule next year. However, we would encourage you not to allow your child to come to school without a jumper BUT with a hoodie/jacket on over their blazer for warmth.
- Whether to allow boots. Our policy says that boots are not allowed (the website shows examples of footwear that is allowed). A few parents have asked that boots be allowed for the winter months. Our policy seeks to avoid students wearing "fashion" items or inappropriate footwear. So, in response to the request we WILL allow smart, plain, black, leather (or leather look) **ankle** boots. Please note that other types of boots (calf length, hiking boots, Doc Martins, Uggs, or other fashion boots) will continue to be banned.

Homework (*all year groups*)

We have recently conducted a review of our homework systems and as a result, have made some changes in the way that homework will be issued. Students should now record homework in their student planner, although it may also appear on Show My Homework. In each subject students are issued with a list of independent activities at the start of each teaching block. This may include a reading list (including online articles, website links, journals, books, newspaper articles, library resources and video links) to build or extend their knowledge of the topics currently being studied. With this in mind, students **always** have independent work to complete in preparation for their lessons, and teachers will direct students to these activities at the appropriate time. There may also be other homework tasks set to consolidate learning and prepare for assessments. So, in answer to the perennial question to your child, "Do you have any homework?", if they say "no", they will always have an independent study task they can complete.

Events in School (*all year groups*)

There are a huge number of events taking place in school next half-term. The school will be open on Saturday 3rd November for a firework display in aid of St. Cuthbert's Hospice (details on our website), and we have a series of events and activities planned to mark Armistice Day, and the 100-year anniversary of the end of First World War. All year groups will be involved in some way, but Year 8 will be taking part in a series of activities with the DLI museum from Durham. We will also be supporting Children in Need on 16th November (a non-uniform day) and have a winter music concert planned for 11th December. There are more activities planned; please keep reading our website.

Sixth Form (Years 12-13)

Students should be preparing for assessments in each of their subjects which take place after half-term (see above). Year 12 students should be preparing for work experience by finding a placement for February. Advice and support are available from the Sixth Form team, should they need it. UCAS is high on our agenda for many of our Year 13 students next half-term too. Please encourage your child to complete their form in good time so that they have the best chance of offers from their first choice universities.

Key Dates (all year groups)

I wrote to parents before the summer with some key dates for 2018/19 but thought it would be helpful to show them again, with the additional dates outlined in this letter, included. Please note a couple of further changes:

- Our Year 11 Revision Evening, for parents and students, designed to help prepare them for their mock examinations and GCSEs next summer. This is a very important evening so please try to make every effort to attend
- We plan to split the Year 8 parents' evening over two nights as this year group has grown significantly since June when the calendars were first published.

Last year, we trialled an on-line booking system for parents' evenings and received a very positive response, so we will use this for all of our evenings this year. Details will be provided closer to the evening for your child. The dates we provided before the summer, with the additions and changes shown in red, are as follows.

Term 1

- **Friday 19th October 2018: Teacher Training Day: students do not attend**
- Half-Term 2: Monday 29th October – Friday 21st December 2018

Term 2

- Half Term 3: Monday 7th January 2019 – Thursday 14th February 2019
- **Friday 15th February 2019: Teacher Training Day: students do not attend**
- Half-Term 4: Monday 25th February 2019 – Friday 5th April 2019

Term 3

- Half-Term 5: Tuesday 23rd April 2019 – Friday 26th May 2019
- Half-Term 6: Monday 3rd June 2019 – Friday 19th July 2019

Dates for Parents' and Information Evenings: 2018/19

Year 7

- Drop-in session to meet tutors: Monday 15th October 2018
- X Band Parents' Evening: Thursday 17th January 2019
- Y Band Parents' Evening: Thursday 24th January 2019

Year 8

- Options Evening: Tuesday 15th January 2019
- **X Band Parents' Evening: Tuesday 5th February 2019**
- **Y Band Parents' Evening: Tuesday 12th February 2019**

Year 9

- **Careers Information Evening (Learning Journals): Tuesday 13th November 2018**
- **Parents' Evening (9A; 9B; 9C; 9D): Thursday 14th March 2019**
- **Parents' Evening (9E; 9F; 9G; 9H): Thursday 21st March 2019**

Year 10

- **Careers Information Evening (Work Experience): Thursday 15th November 2018**
- Parents' Evening: Thursday 4th July 2019

Year 11

- Parents' Evening 1: Tuesday 27th November 2018
- **Revision Evening (for students and parents): Thursday 6th December 2018**
- Parents' Evening 2: Monday 1st April 2019

Year 12/13

- Parents' Evening: Thursday 28th February 2019

Other Important Dates: 2018/19

- Year 10 Exams: Week Commencing 17th June 2019
- Year 11 Mock Exams 1: Week Commencing 7th January 2019
- Year 11 Mock Exams 2: Weeks commencing 25th February and 4th March 2019
- Year 12 Exams: Weeks commencing 3rd June and 10th June 2019
- Year 13 Mock Exams: Week commencing 21st January 2019

Website and Social Media (*all year groups*)

Please continue to use our website and follow our progress on social media. I write a weekly blog (www.framheadteacher.com) covering key issues in education (behaviour, funding, assessment, the Curriculum), and most departments in school have Twitter accounts posting activities, sports results, and news from their area. The school Twitter feed is being updated (more details to follow), and my Twitter feed is @framheadteacher

Finally

It has been a long but rewarding half-term. We were buoyed by our excellent exam results, and are determined to improve on them again next year. If you do have concerns or questions, we really want to hear from you. The Contact page on our website provides information on the best person to contact for specific queries. Please remember that students are not in school this Friday (19th October). Have a lovely half-term break.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Byers
Headteacher