

29th May 08

Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to update you on developments at Sir Frank Markham School over the last half term.

Developing an Enterprise Culture

At Sir Frank Markham School we believe, as do Edge, the Academy sponsor, that developing an enterprise culture at the heart of our work is an excellent way of engaging students and enabling them to develop the skills and qualities as well gain the qualifications that they will need in the future.

At our staff conference in February we began to explore ways in which we can build on new approaches introduced in year 7 this year to develop enterprising approaches to learning in every area of the school's work, and at our training day in March we began to move from discussion to planning. All departments are piloting new, more enterprising approaches to learning this term, and this work will be extended in the 2008-2009 school year to coincide with changes to the National Curriculum.

What does all this mean?

Enterprising learning means learning that is more active and student centred. It means giving students more responsibility for their learning, and helping them to develop the skills to work independently as well as in teams. Enterprising approaches to learning will encourage initiative, creativity, risk-taking, research and problem-solving, and will also develop related skills such as leadership, communication and presentation as well as literacy and numeracy. Wherever possible, learning will be related to practical, "real life" situations so that students can see and understand its relevance.

We will also be developing approaches to personal finance as part of the curriculum, and students will have opportunities to set up and help to run small businesses at the school, supported by mentors from the local business community. In addition, we will be encouraging all our students to apply enterprising approaches to tackling community and environmental issues.

In these ways we believe that we will not only improve learning outcomes for our students but will also make learning more enjoyable and help students develop the skills and personal qualities they will need to

help them to succeed in work, be good citizens and be happy in life.

Academy Developments

The building programme is on schedule and the new Academy is still expected to open its doors in September 2009. Detailed planning is underway to work out every detail for the new school, from the curriculum and staffing structure to the environmentally friendly nature of the building design and operation.

Final Examinations

The Year 9 SATs are now behind us and exams are underway for our Year 11 and Sixth Form students. Our invigilators have asked us what we have done differently this year as they have noticed the near 100% attendance levels and excellent student behaviour and concentration in exams.

The answer lies in a great deal of hard work, and some highly focussed exam preparation, including the very successful Easter and Whitsun revision classes. In addition, students taking exams have been offered a free nutritious breakfast if they get in early, and before all exams students have attended a final briefing session with a subject representative to help them to relax and focus on the challenge ahead.

We are hopeful that all of this preparation will have a very positive impact on final results, and are looking forward to celebrating these with our students in August.

Sixth Form Developments

Planning for our new Sixth Form is well advanced and we expect between 60 and 75 current year 11 students to return in September to study for post-16 courses. This number is much higher than the number of students who went on to MK6 (our joint sixth form with Milton Keynes College since 2002) and reflects the growing confidence in the school's improvement as well as excitement about continuing courses after one year in the new Academy.

All students in year 11 will shortly get a letter confirming their intentions for next year, and for those joining our new sixth form there will be 2 induction days on 30th June and 1st July to prepare them for their post-16 studies at SFM .

Results Days

For year 11 results are issued on Thursday 22nd September. We strongly advise students to come into school to get their results as SFM staff and Careers Advisers will be on hand to assist in the event that any students have changed their mind, have done better or worse than expected, or have still not sorted out what they are going to do next year. Free refreshments will also be available.

For A level students results will be available at Milton Keynes College on August 15th, and for Year 9 students SATs results will be available on return in September (Science and Maths results may be available before we break up in July).

Our bid for the Artsmark Silver Award

Way back last October we submitted an ambitious bid for the highly prized Artsmark award. Artsmark is awarded by Arts Council England to schools that can demonstrate a strong commitment to the Arts and show that they have a very wide range of Arts provision both during and outside of the school day.

Schools can bid for bronze, silver or gold, and although we had not previously submitted a bid we believed that the Arts at Sir Frank Markham have improved so much that we should skip the bronze and go straight for silver. We had hoped to have heard the result by now, and will let you know the outcome

as soon as we are informed of it. We are confident of success, however, and are already working on plans to “go for gold”.

Home Contact details

We have had some problems contacting parents / carers recently as a result of not having been informed of changes to contact details, especially mobile phone numbers. It is essential that we can always contact you speedily when necessary, so please make sure that if any of your contact details change you immediately advise Dianne Taylor, our Student Information Systems manager, by letter, phone or E Mail (dtaylor@sfmcs.org.uk).

Thinking about getting back into learning / need a helping hand?

In an exciting new development we are getting together with the Open University to offer our parents and other adults a range of short courses that can be taken regardless of past qualification or the length of time since you last studied. Anyone on state benefits or with a low annual household income will be able to apply for free places on the courses. For more information please see the enclosed leaflet.

End of Summer Term Activity Days

As I mentioned in my last letter we are planning to celebrate the end of the year by extending learning experiences for our students beyond the classroom. Students will have the opportunity to develop new skills and acquire new interests, and will be able to choose from a menu of activities. Details of the programme for the three days will be provided in early July

Dates for your diary

Thursday 5 th June	Staff Training Day – school closed to students except those taking examinations
Thursday 12 th June	Year 8 Parent Consultation Afternoon / Evening (NB – this is a re-arranged date. School closes for students at 1.15 pm)
Wednesday 9 th July	Summer Performing Arts showcase
Monday 21 st – Wednesday 23 rd July	Activity days for all students
Wednesday 23 rd July	School closes for students at 1.15 pm for summer holidays
Thursday 15 th August	A level results released by Milton Keynes College
Thursday 22 nd August	Year 11 results available from 10am to 2pm in Seckloe Library
Monday 1 st and Tuesday 2 nd September	Staff training days
Wednesday 3 rd September	Year 7 and Year 12 only return by 8.40 am.
Thursday 4 th September	Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 return by 8.40 am. Years 7 and 12 continue

As we near the end of what has been an exciting and highly successful year for the school we wish all our students taking examinations every success. Staff and students have worked harder than ever, and I am indebted to all our parents and carers for working with us so positively to help our young learners to be as successful as they can possibly be.

Yours sincerely

Mike O’Mahony
Headteacher