

17-9-'07

Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to update you on news at Sir Frank Markham School as the new school year gets underway.

Results

Prior to the summer recess we had received news of encouraging Key Stage 3 SATs results in Maths and Science, and during the holidays we learnt that our KS3 English results has also exceeded targets agreed with the local authority. Our School Improvement Partner has calculated that our SATs results at KS3 will place us in the top 25% of schools nationally in terms of the progress made by our students since they joined us.

Our Key Stage 4 results also show an improvement of 3% on our headline figure of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades. This is encouraging, although we still need to do much better at the end of this Key Stage. We are confident, however, that as the new systems we put in place a year ago start to become properly embedded rates of student progress will further improve and we will see a big jump in results next summer.

At A level our overall pass rate (A-E) improved from 91 to 95%, and the percentage of students gaining higher grades at this level (A-C) improved from 26 in 2006 to 55 this summer.

All in all, although we know we can still do better, the results this summer confirm the improvements identified by Ofsted in November 2006 and June 2007 and reflect much hard work on the part of staff as well as students. The improved results also reflect improving communication and partnership with parents and carers, and I am grateful for your support with our continuing efforts to raise the aspirations of our students and enable them to achieve the very best results that they are capable of.

Academy Developments

At the end of this month interviews for the new Academy Principal (to be known as Principal Designate until the Academy opens) will take place and I will let you know the outcome in my next letter towards the end of October. The contractor to build the new school should be appointed next month, and it is expected that building work will get underway early in 2008. The Local Authority, as well as the Academy sponsor, Edge, are confident that the new Academy will open on time in September 2009.

Attendance

Very good student attendance and punctuality is one of the keys to success at school. Statistics show

clearly that students who have poor attendance and punctuality are less likely to gain good qualifications. Attendance and punctuality are also key priorities for employers and the school provides attendance and punctuality figures in any student reference.

The Milton Keynes Education Welfare Service (EWS) is working very closely with the school to improve student attendance and we have introduced a number of initiatives to recognise and reward good attendance and punctuality. In addition, during the last school year the EWS introduced a system of Fixed Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance and punctuality. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued by the school when a student has unauthorised absence, persistent lateness, or when a family has taken a holiday during term time without gaining permission from the school (the school's policy is not to authorise holiday's in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances). Failure to pay a fixed penalty notice will result in prosecution. A number of students were issued fixed penalty notices in the last school year.

Healthy Lifestyle / Healthy Eating / Effective Learning

As a school, we are aware of the vital role a healthy diet as part of a healthy lifestyle has in helping all students to reach their potential. To help to give students a good start to the day where they may have left home without having eaten, the Breakfast Club is open from 7.45am until 8.35 am Monday to Friday, and details and sample menus are to be found in the leaflet enclosed with this letter.

In the dining rooms, our staff encourage students to make healthy choices. All breakfast items, snacks at break time and in the After School Café, midday meals and sandwiches are made to the highest standards and conform to all the latest government guidelines. Every day there are freshly cooked home-made meals accompanied by a selection of three vegetables, and a vegetarian option is always provided. If these do not suit your child's taste on a particular day, they can visit our Specials Bar which offers jacket potatoes, pasta and salad, or healthy eating pizza. Alongside this, we run a sandwich and wrap counter, where your child can choose from between eight and ten different fillings daily! All drinks sold throughout the day are fat-free, preservative-free natural juices, smoothies or Frutini drinks, and we also supply a whole range of bottled waters.

Drinking water is accessible at all times and students are allowed to drink water in most lessons, unless there is a health and safety issue, with the prior consent of the teacher.

Research shows clearly that healthy eating, along with regular exercise and enough rest and relaxation helps students to improve their concentration and level of progress in lessons. Please help us to help your son or daughter reach their full potential by reinforcing these important messages and encouraging them to restrict sweets, fizzy drinks and other unhealthy foodstuffs to a bare minimum.

Health Related Behaviour Survey

We had over seven hundred replies to this survey and the feedback received will inform the steps we now take to further improve our ability to ensure students have all the advice, guidance and support they need to help them make healthy choices and be healthy citizens. For more detailed information on the findings as well as our "next steps" please refer to the enclosure with this letter.

Sale of School Uniform

Please note that school uniform can only be purchased from Student Reception in our Seckloe building at the following times: 8.15 – 8.30 am; 12 midday – 2 pm; and 3.15 – 4 pm.

Lost Property

We have a large number of lost property items which we are not able to keep indefinitely in school. Please note that items handed in will be disposed of after 4 weeks if they have not been claimed. Anyone who has lost an item should contact Student Reception at Seckloe.

Forthcoming Dates for Your Diary

Wednesday 17 th October	Achievers Evening
Thursday 1 st November	Prospective Parents Evening (early closure after period 4 @ 2 pm)
Thursday 8 th November	Progress Review / Target Setting Evening for parent / carers and students with Form Tutors (4.30-7.30 pm)

Finally, I am delighted to able to confirm that we have started the new school year fully staffed. I have every confidence that we will continue and even accelerate our improvement this year, and once again look forward to working in partnership with you to help all our students achieve the very best that they are capable of.

Yours sincerely

Mike O'Mahony
Headteacher