



SBy/esk
24th March 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

It has been a very short term but a term which has been packed with a huge variety of events and activities and I would like to mention one or two of them to you.

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Inspection

Last Friday (18th March 2016) we had our SIAMS inspection, which was conducted by Ms Jo Fageant from the Oxford Diocese. This is an inspection which St Edmund's last had just over five years ago, before I became Headteacher. The framework for inspection has changed significantly since then and the expectations of a church school in the promotion of a Christian education for its students are high. On Friday I had cause to be very proud indeed of the work that both staff and students presented and although we will not receive the final judgement until after Easter, the feedback we received was exceptionally positive. For me, one of the best aspects was the recognition that rather than being a school led by league tables, we put the needs of the students first. Students were praised for their passion and their articulate expression of and commitment to our school values of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience and for their excellent leadership skills.

Unfortunately, Mr Magill, our Subject Leader for RS and for Worship, was unable to be in school for the inspection. Many of you know that he is unwell and is currently receiving treatment, but much of the background work that went into the inspection preparation was influenced by Mr Magill. In particular, our Micah verse from the Bible, now displayed on very attractive canvases around the school and adopted by student leadership groups, was suggested by him. I would like to thank all staff and students involved in the inspection and in particular Mrs Smith.

I will look forward to sharing the inspection report with you after the holiday.

Year 10 Work Experience

Thank you to Ms Lucas, who organised a very successful week of work experience for all our Year 10 students last week. They returned to school on Monday full of tales of the workplace and able to share a wide variety of experiences. Staff enjoyed their visits to girls in their placements and it is always a delight to hear employers praise them. I was amused to find that when I visited two girls at placements last Tuesday they were both fully engaged in the same activity: animal poo picking!! Rachel and Mia were at work on a farm, I should add, but it was lovely to see one in a horse field and the other in a chicken enclosure, both hard at work and with big smiles on their faces! From hairdressing to animal care and working with a law firm and experience in a lab, our girls performed exceptionally well and are to be congratulated for what they achieved.

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Visits and Trips

We have a wide range of visits and trips for students in different year groups taking place each term. This term has been a busy one, with trips to universities, visits related to our Science curriculum and theatre experiences, to name but a few. Mrs Webb led a group of girls to the Château de la Baudonnière in France once again for a very enjoyable and successful residential trip. The weather was unpredictable and the school value of Resilience was very much required! The girls and staff once again enjoyed the opportunity to speak French in France, an excellent way to improve language skills. Last weekend some 40 students spent the weekend at a PGL centre in Surrey where they enjoyed outdoor and team building activities. I am immensely grateful to the staff who give up their time to plan and lead these enriching experiences for girls.

Year 11 GCSE Preparation

Our Year 11 girls are working hard to prepare for the final GCSE examinations coming up soon. I am grateful to teaching staff who have offered Easter holiday revision sessions, and would ask you to encourage your daughter to attend these, as they really can make a difference. However, Years 10 and 11 need to be reminded that the preparation for GCSEs that makes the most difference now is repeated exam practice. In almost every subject, the completion of practice questions or full papers under timed conditions will help any student improve her chances of success. I would encourage all girls to spend time over the holiday practising exam questions, ready to hand them to their teachers for marking at the start of the new term. In Year 11, where Maths is the single most important GCSE, this approach is especially needed and will lead to grade improvement. If parents can help with the timing of such sessions then that would also be very useful.

Uniform

I should like to remind parents about uniform: I would be glad if you would ensure that your daughter wears the correct uniform at all times, including a school skirt of an appropriate length, the correct style of shoes and only jewellery in line with our guidelines. Please do not allow your daughter to have any additional piercings; the only time of the year when this is appropriate is the first week of the summer holiday in July. This is so that the nose or ear stud can be removed by the start of September for school. Girls may wear the optional pale blue polo shirt (available through Price and Buckland: <http://st-edmunds.eu/school-life/uniform/>) for the next two terms only (i.e. until the summer holidays). When we return for the autumn terms the girls should be wearing their usual three-quarter sleeve length blue blouse.

Morning arrival at school

This morning a student was dropped off at school at 6.30 a.m. It is also not unusual for girls to be in school at 7 a.m. or just after. I need to be clear that we cannot be held responsible for your daughter's safety until 7.45 a.m. at the earliest and I need to ask again that parents do not drop their daughters off at school before 7.45 a.m..

I hope that you and your families have an enjoyable and relaxing Easter break and we will look forward to welcoming your daughters back to school on Monday 11th April.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Busby
Headteacher