

8 September 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

It has been good to welcome students back this week, refreshed and ready for the challenges of the new year ahead. Thank you for your support with ensuring that they are all dressed smartly in the new uniform. The site team have been very busy over the summer, with some work still to complete, and the main purpose of this letter is to make you aware of the summer capital projects.

Every year we bid to the Government for additional funds to improve the school environment. These bids are often to deal with pressing health and safety issues, for example leaking windows! There are strict rules with regards to how this money can be used, and it must be spent on capital projects. Last year we were successful in our bid for extra capital allocation, and have therefore carried out significant work to enhance the facilities at the school. The main rationale we gave for the bid request was the replacement of several very poor quality windows. By careful use of these funds and some further financial management we have been able to make them go much further. Our number one priority is, as always, the student experience at school, and we therefore decided that we would allocate this money to improve the kitchens and dining room areas, with a view to providing both better food and a more pleasant environment in which to sit and enjoy it, for our students.

The almost unanimous view of students who have eaten food from the new kitchens this year is how much better it is than in previous years. The reconfiguration of the dining room has provided an additional 120 places to sit inside, and further seating in the picnic area, so that we can now accommodate 650 at a time. We also had the main outside seating area next to the dining room refurbished with replacement canopies, so that far more students can be protected from the weather when seated outside as well. As part of changing the approach to eating at school we are now insisting that students eat only in the dining room or picnic area – and not, as in previous years, anywhere else outside. All students are entitled to sit in the dining room when eating –whether they purchase their food at school or bring it from home. It has never been permissible to eat elsewhere in the school buildings. Part of our rationale for this is, as any of our Year 8 or older students will know, the amount of litter that is generated in the sports areas. As well as the health hazard posed by flocks of seagulls attracted by the food waste, these areas can become unusable for PE lessons after lunch and break, and generate significant extra costs associated with our site staff collecting it.

Obviously, as with any change, we have had to implement new systems to manage the settling in period. The first week has had some teething problems, much of which has been a result of the huge increase in demand. We are working on ways of improving the process of queueing and collecting food in the dining room, and of spreading the demand across a slightly longer time frame to reduce congestion.

The window replacement project is ongoing, and we hope will be finished by the end of this half-term. Any work carried out at a school must be preceded by an “asbestos survey” to ensure that there are no hazardous materials that can threaten people’s health if released. Unfortunately these were discovered at the start of this project, and therefore this had to be disposed of by specialist contractors during the holidays – i.e. when there were no staff and students around. The contractors have been very supportive in moving their window replacement activity on-site to the evenings so as not to impact on the school day. When they have finished these rooms will be a far nicer place for students to learn. The work is planned to all be complete by October half term.

Yours faithfully



Mr D Conway
Headteacher