Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back, I hope you all had an enjoyable and restful summer. The majority of our news and information will appear in the Oaklands News which will be published at the end of next week. There are a few important points and a number of timely reminders that could get overlooked in the forthcoming packed edition that I have included in this letter.

**Examination Results**

Congratulations on the performance of all students at GCSE and ‘A’ level. Despite increasing complexity of the GCSE exams, our results were up by about 5% to 71% 5+ A*-C including English and Maths. The number of A* and A grades increased significantly on previous years. Again this year we had a significant number of students with 11 or more A* and A grades. Our curriculum is largely based on GCSE rather than equivalent qualifications. Initial indications suggest we remain in the top 10% of schools in Hampshire and Portsmouth for the Ebac, generally recognised as the toughest measure for schools.

At ‘A’ Level we achieved 99.6% pass rate with an impressive number of ‘A’ and ‘A**’ grades, **79% of students achieved grades ‘A*-C’ similar to the high water mark last year.**

All students in Y13 who wanted to go to university were successful with small numbers selecting a year of travel and work before studying in 2016. Overall recruitment (276 students) is again up on last year (259). Enrolment day is a mixture of emotions, the vast majority of students who wanted to return to Oaklands made the grade. It is always sad when we have to turn away students because they have not met the entry criteria or they would be better served taking an alternative course at another institution.

Whilst crops of ‘A’ grades turn heads, I would also like to praise the students whose achievements might not be headline grabbing, but for them they have achieved a personal best. There are many individual stories of grit and determination.

These achievements are the result of the hard work of students and our very talented and committed teachers and support staff. At Oaklands we have a culture of high expectations, aspirations and excellence; students understand and respond to this. During results day it is always a delight to speak to parents who are full of praise for the school and the teachers. Whilst the comments about results are gratifying, it has been the flood of comments about the outstanding quality of pastoral care and the superb support for the most vulnerable students from parents that creates the greatest resonance with our ethos. Thank you to parents and carers for this endorsement.
**Student Planner and Show My Homework**

Many parents will be aware that we introduced a new planner in 2014; students use this alongside our web based homework portal ‘Show-My Homework’. All homework is now set on this portal. As this can be seen by parents, many of you have questioned the necessity to sign the homework planner. For the next academic year it will not be necessary for parents to sign the planner but we will review this in July 2016. However the planner is still there as a vehicle for you to communicate with the school. Form Tutors will continue to sign the planner once a week. Subject teachers may also write messages which require a parental acknowledgement. Further details regarding additional learning opportunities and school detention procedures will appear in the first edition of the Oaklands News. If you have concerns about the quantity of homework being set by staff please contact subject teachers.

Students will still use planners to support homework; they are not to be used by students as a scribble pad or note book. They remain the property of the school and cost £3.00 to replace. I have stressed to form tutors the importance of checking the planner on a weekly basis.

The homework timetables will shortly appear on the school website. I suggest a copy is placed in your child’s bedroom and somewhere else prominent at home. More information about homework can be found at: [http://www.oaklands.hants.sch.uk/page/?title=Homework+Area&pid=27](http://www.oaklands.hants.sch.uk/page/?title=Homework+Area&pid=27)

**Uniform**

The standard of uniform in school is very high. Information about uniform, jewellery and hair styles can be found in the planner and on the school website. Parents and carers, please ensure that your child leaves home correctly dressed to comply with the Governors’ Uniform Policy. It is a continual frustration when students arrive at school, after leaving home, incorrectly dressed or wearing makeup that can only have been applied early in the morning. The school has a stock of black plimsolls which will be loaned to students who wear footwear that is inappropriate for school. I would also ask you to monitor uniform, make-up and jewellery. The Governors’ policy on this issue is clear; students who wear make-up will be asked to remove it; make-up will be confiscated and left at reception for parents to collect.

**Canteen Fobs**

‘Cashless Catering’ has been operating now for almost two years. Over 90% of transactions are being paid for through this method. Parents are asked to ensure that students’ fobs are charged at the beginning of term and kept topped up throughout the year as there is no available credit system. Any issues with on line payments should be directed towards our finance team. For the last few years the school has been subsidising the school canteen. Food prices have been reviewed for this September and will be looked at again in February 2016. Price lists will be published on the school website.

**Keeping up with Payments**

At Oaklands we are very fortunate that so many staff are prepared to give their time after school, weekends and holidays to organise trips visits and extra-curricular experiences. The majority of these are ‘extras’ and not necessary for the curriculum. Where trips have to be paid for and a large sum of money is involved parents have the option to pay in instalments. If you fall behind on payments for trips, bus passes, music tuition and any other activities provided for your child by the school or find yourself owing the school money for any reason the responsibility is yours to come and talk to us. Students will not be permitted on trips if there is a debt owing at the time of departure.
**Attendance and Fixed Penalty Notices**

Oaklands has an outstanding record of attendance - for the last two years we have achieved 96% attendance rate which is fantastic. Attending school is the single greatest influential factor for academic success. Parents are aware that Headteachers can no longer authorise absence from school for the purpose of holiday unless there are extremely exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, parents must familiarise themselves with Hampshire County Council guidelines on Fixed Penalty Notices which is available on our website under the Parents - Attendance tab. From September 2015 Oaklands must be compliant with County policy of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for poor attendance or poor punctuality. Information related to Fixed Penalty Notices is also available on the website. An FPN will be issued when a pupil has had 10 or more half-day absences in a 10 week period or one or more unauthorised absences during a public exam period.

**Bags and Books**

Parents are asked to remind their children that they should not be carrying around large numbers of books. One of the problems is that students carry all their books for the day which is not necessary. The way to overcome the problem is for students to make sure they are well organised and only pack the equipment for the day ahead. Lockers are available to hire for all Key Stage 3 students and Key Stage 4 students may opt to have one if they wish to. Please contact the Finance Office for more information. Parents are asked to encourage their child to follow this important guidance.

**Mobile Phones**

The school recognises that a total ban on mobile phones in school is both unrealistic and unreasonable. They are part of everyday technology and students need to be aware of how to use technology appropriately. They give some students a greater sense of safety and security particularly on a long journey to and from school. However, since our school site is generally a very safe place, we consider that in normal circumstances, the whole school day should be considered as phone and electronic device free. We continue to **strongly recommend** that students do not bring their mobile phones or other electronic devices including i-Phone watches or similar to school. They are very expensive items and if they go missing the school will not take responsibility for them. Parents are advised to carry their own insurance for their child’s belongings as they are not covered by school policies.

For students in Years 7-11 mobile phones or other electronic devices are not to be used or seen during the school day (8:50-3:40) and must be switched off at all times including break and lunchtimes. Please do not text or phone your children during the day, or encourage your child to contact you; this can cause unnecessary problems. All communication should go through Student Services. Parents will be contacted and asked to collect a student’s mobile phone if it has been confiscated for being used in school time.

**Social Networking**

Last year the school had to manage a number of difficult issues related to the use social networking by students. The vast majority of these issues originate outside of school when the students are the responsibility of parents. Because of the impact on safety and learning, we are often left to unpick a tangled web frequently involving a large circle of ‘friends’ some of whom are not Oaklands students. I cannot stress enough the importance of parents being aware of their child’s on-line and social media activity. The school will continue to take a firm line with students and parents when social media is inappropriately used.
**Ambition for the Future**

The support parents and carers give students is a contributory factor in student success. Over the next two years external exams will get tougher. All students will receive support which includes, setting, reduced group size or specific intervention. The governors and I have set ambitious targets for the future, I see no reason why our new Year 11 should not come close to achieving 80% higher grade passes at GCSE and 100% of students in Year 13 pass at ‘A’ level; All students should achieve their potential, the forecasts are very encouraging. Raising teenagers has its trials and triumphs and I never underestimate the weight of responsibility on parents’ shoulders. Working in partnership will ensure the best outcome - we are always here to help.

**Finally**

The next edition of the ‘Oaklands News’ will be published next week and will contain the school calendar and many interesting articles about life at Oaklands.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

M Quinn
Headteacher