

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

9th February 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

The pace of life at Oaklands continues to be high, with lots of events taking place as we navigate this incredibly short term. Over the half term break more than 250 students will be involved in extra-curricular activities at home and abroad, my thanks to the benevolence of staff who have given up their holiday to make these events occur.

The focus this half term has been on assessments at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 particularly for students approaching the summer public examinations. After these assessments, we held a number of follow up Parents' Evenings, which provided an opportunity to discuss progress and detail the next steps for our students. This term we have endeavoured to chase up parents who were unable to attend these important parents' events.

Outside of the buzz of the classroom, students have been preparing for the annual school show, which this year was Les Misérables. Thank you to everyone who has supported this fantastic production and to those who came to see the amazing talent we have within our school community. Sporting fixtures have also continued to come around thick and fast, and we will report our school successes in the next edition of Oaklands News.

Our heating replacement work has commenced more about this later in this letter.

Uniform

Half term provides parents with an opportunity to resolve uniform issues. I have spoken to a number of students about non-regulation footwear. Students need to wear shoes that accord with the uniform policy. Our school policy makes it clear that trainers should not be worn. Unhelpfully, a number of shoe manufacturers have started to market trainers masquerading as school shoes.

If you are buying new school shoes over half term, please ensure that they comply with the school policy. All other uniform issues should be resolved before we return. Similar to uniform, the school regulations on piercings is clear and can be found by following [this link](#).

Lost Property

Over the last term and a half we have gathered a considerable volume of lost property, all of which is not named. The replacement value must amount to many thousands of pounds which is a concern at times where family budgets are stretched. If your child's possessions are named there is some chance they will be returned.

Nearly New Uniform

Our Oaklands Friends' and Parents' Association (OFPA) hold an extensive collection of second-hand uniform; to purchase this please follow [this link](#).

Their next uniform sale will be on Friday 23rd February. Please email any requests and orders by Wednesday 21st February to opa@oaklandscatholicschool.org.

Student Equipment

Being prepared for learning is really important; it removes a lot of frustration throughout the day. Could I please ask that during half term, you check and ensure your child has a pen, pencil, colouring pencils, ruler, and a calculator. Without these items the start to lessons are delayed and learning time is lost to giving out and loaning equipment.

Year 9 Options

A massive thank you to all Year 9 parents for completing the options Preference Form. My team have now set to work on constructing the option blocks. Inevitably, we will not be able to please all students; this was made clear during the Options Evening. However, I hope that all students will be able to select their first choice from the blocks.

Free School Meals

For some families navigating through the benefit system can be problematic. If you are on a low income your child may be entitled to free school meals. If you believe that this applies to you, please follow [this link](#).

Attendance

The national picture related to school attendance is a cause for concern. The DfE are keen to reiterate that attendance is a parental responsibility and that schools should issue fixed penalty fines when families take unauthorised holidays. We will continue to follow the DfE and Local Authority guidance.

Heating Replacement Project

We recently announced that the school was successful in securing a £2.7m grant to upgrade our heating infrastructure. This work is essential, with much of our heating system in the older parts of the school approaching its 70th birthday. This project is now underway with the works anticipated to finish at the end of December 2024. A project of this nature naturally brings disruption to the school, however, through careful planning, we have minimised as best as we can the disruption this will cause students. Work during term times will only take place in four classrooms at a time, with the most disruptive work taking place during the school holiday periods. This has prevented the need for students to be relocated to temporary portacabin classrooms. We will keep you updated as the project progresses.

Road Safety

Thank you to all the parents who are now making alternative arrangements to prevent congestion outside school in the mornings and evenings. We are continuing to work with the local authority and police; I wrote to them again this week to find a more enforceable solution to improve safety for pedestrians and other road users.

Making Appointments to see Staff

There has been an increase in parents and carers coming onto the school site and demanding to see staff. All of our staff have extremely busy diaries, and many teach throughout the school day. If you have an urgent issue, please call ahead or email into school and we will aim to make an appointment to see you if necessary. We have produced guidance on parental engagement with school please follow [this link](#) .

Student Services and Student Medical Issues

A small but growing number of parents have started to approach the school asking for medical advice. Our Student Services team are not medical professionals they are First Aid trained to deal with incidents that take place during the day and react accordingly, administering first aid and contacting parents when necessary. If you have concerns about the fitness of your child to attend school you should contact your GP, local pharmacy or 111, or in an emergency 999.

I would also like to remind parents that if your child has an injury that requires a risk assessment, this will be undertaken at school after they have seen a medical professional. Please ring the school prior to your child returning to arrange a time for the risk assessment to take place and bring any supporting medical evidence with you. Please note that a parent/carer needs to be present when the risk assessment is carried out.

Key Dates for the Remainder of the Spring Term

A full list of dates for the Spring Term can be found in the December edition of [Oaklands News](#).

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| 19 th February – 1 st March | Year 13 Mock Exam Period |
| Thursday 22 nd February | Year 12 Parents' Evening |
| Tuesday 27 th February | Year 12 Post-18 Information Evening |
| Monday 4 th March | OFPA Meeting |
| Wednesday 6 th March | SEN Parent's Consultation Evening |
| Monday 11 th – Friday 15 th March | Year 11 Mock Exams |
| Thursday 14 th March | Year 7 Parents' Evening |
| Friday 15 th March | Duke of Edinburgh Award Presentation Evening |
| Thursday 21 st March | Design Showcase |
| Wednesday 27 th March | Year 13 Parents' Evening |
| Thursday 28 th March | Last Day of Term |
| Friday 29 th March | Good Friday |

Finally, students return to school on Monday 19th February and we will be in the season of Lent in the Christian church. Lent is the season of spiritual preparation before Easter. During Lent, many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. The purpose of the Lenten season is to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ - to consider his suffering and his sacrifice, his life, death, burial, and resurrection. We will be exploring some of these themes during the coming weeks with students. In addition to this we will be sharing some of these messages with parents through the Oaklands Way. This will drop into your inbox after half term.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr M Quinn', written in a cursive style.

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher