

WH/RNM/NOV11LET2

23 November 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

### **NATIONAL STRIKE ACTION**

You may be aware that there is a national day of Union action as part of a campaign against proposals to make changes to public sector pensions provisions on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November. I understand that the NUT, ATL, NASUWT, Unison and GMB, have all voted to participate.

We have undertaken a risk assessment based on the number of our staff that will be participating in the strike on the 30<sup>th</sup> November and regrettably a decision has been made to close the school. I am sure you will appreciate the health, safety and wellbeing of our pupils is paramount, and I am sorry if this causes any inconvenience.

If there is a change of heart by any of the unions, and our plans for the day alter we will post this information on the website and send a text message.

### **YEAR 9 OPTION PROCESS**

In the next few days we will be conducting a consultation with students in Year 9 to identify possible options choices for next year. This is only a provisional indication, which will help us establish which subjects are most popular and allow us to plan ahead. There are no circumstances in which the young people will be held to this initial expression of interest. As always, there will be a 'Briefing Evening' for parents and young people on Thursday 12 January 2012. Here we will discuss the options process in detail. There are however, two changes which I would like to bring to your attention in advance of this.

First, GCSE Spanish and German can now be studied from beginner's level, without having studied the language during Key Stage 3.

Second, we are proposing to offer Triple Science as an option choice for all students likely to achieve Level Six or higher in Science during this year. In the past this has been delivered in the same curriculum time as Double Award Science. We are making this change for three reasons. It will reduce the pressure experienced by our most able students, and increase the number of students achieving the highest A and A\* grades in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The third reason is to enable more students to study these courses, which has traditionally been accelerated and exclusively offered only to the most able.

Students will be asked to complete the consultation during tutor time, following my assembly on Wednesday morning. There will be considerably more input and advice for Year 9 and our families, with a Subject Consultation Evening on Thursday 8 December 2011, further events in January, and final commitments not being made until February. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Learning Team Leader for the subject you have a question about or our Assistant Headteacher for Curriculum Mrs Rooney.

### **MOBILE PHONES**

Can I remind our families of our school expectation with regards mobile phones? I know that you appreciate the assurance of safety that giving a mobile phone to your daughter or son allows and we would always want to support this. During the school day, however, phones should neither be seen nor heard. Where young people choose not to follow this the phone is confiscated, and will need to be collected from Reception at the end of the day. The tiny numbers of repeat offenders are required to hand their phones in at the start of the next day. Thank you for your support with this.

### **WINTER WEATHER**

There has been much talk in the media about our unseasonably warm November, however I am sure it will not last and that we will eventually have snow. It is always my default position that school should remain

open in snow. It is not always an easy judgement call to make; we have to evaluate the safety of the school site, the safety of the young people and staff travelling to school, and the outlook for the weather during the rest of the day. We always consult with the bus companies, who also give proper consideration to safety. It is always a tough decision, and one made on a daily basis between 5.30 and 6.00 am. My first choice, after an appropriate consultation and assessment of risk, is to keep school open.

In the event of a school closure there are three ways we communicate this message with home. The first is through our school web site, which will have a note announcing the closure on the home page. The other web announcement would be through the Leeds City Council web site. The 'Schools' section still has some of the old Education Leeds branding, but the page on school closures is usually correct. It is by reading from this web page that Radio Leeds and Radio Aire make their school closure announcements.

We have found that the most effective way to communicate the 'school closure' message is by text message, and in the event of our school closing we will text all parents in the morning. Of course, it may be difficult to know whether the mobile number you originally gave us is still the one you are using now. So we have sent out a 'test text' telling you that this newsletter was coming out. If you have received this text, we have the correct and current mobile number for you. If you have not received this 'test text', then the number we have is incorrect. In this situation please can you contact the appropriate Year Office to update your contact details?

### **UNIFORM**

I know I have said this before, but thank you for your support with our new school uniform. I would like to remind families with girls that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 the only skirt to be worn in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, will be the Boston Spa plaid skirt. We are, of course, happy for girls to continue to wear black trousers, but if a skirt is to be worn it should only be the plaid one. The skirt is available for order direct from APC or through our web site now. Year 11 girls can of course choose to wear the new plaid, but can also choose to continue wearing a black knee length skirt. This concession exists only for Year 11.

### **SIXTH FORM**

It was lovely to welcome so many to our Sixth Form Open Evening. This is only the first stage of our support for Year 11, and if you have any questions, or want additional support as your daughter or son looks at what to do next year, please do not hesitate to contact our Head of Sixth Form Mr Rumsey on 01937 846612. I look forward to celebrating the success of our Sixth Formers at our Celebration Evening next month.

### **IMPORTANT DIARY DATES**

Can I remind you of some key dates for the next few weeks?

Thursday	01/12 /11	Year 12 and 13 Subject Consultation Evening
Monday	05/12/11	Year 11 Trial Examinations begin
Tuesday	13/12/11	Christmas Concert, 7.00pm in the Main Hall
Thursday	15/12/11	Sixth Form Celebration Evening
Friday	16/12/11	School Closes at 12.20pm
Tuesday	03/01/12	School Re-opens
Thursday	12/01/12	Year 9 Options Briefing for Parents
Tuesday	07/02/12	Whole School 'Review Day'

### **HEAD'S BLOG**

We are blessed to be part of a school where so much goes on. It is difficult in a monthly newsletter to sum up all that has been happening in our school, so I would encourage you to read the weekly Head's Blog on the school web site. It is usually updated on a Friday evening, and hopefully it contains a flavour of the rich variety in our school life. Recently it featured National Take Over Day, Children in Need, Remembrance Day, sporting success and it introduced some new staff joining our teams.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH  
Headteacher