



PRINCIPAL'S PARENT/CARER BRIEFING

w/c Monday 8th September 2025

Dear Parents / Carers

I would like to warmly welcome both new and existing Parents/Carers of Parkside School to the start of the new academic year. Our new Year 7 students made a positive first impression on their induction day on Wednesday when they started the school year along with our Year 13. It was lovely to see the remaining students return on Thursday, as we held rolling assemblies for Years 8 to 11 during the school day to set the scene for the year ahead.

In our staff training days on Monday and Tuesday we focussed on building and developing our culture of 'high challenge with high support' to permeate across all aspects of the school, whether within classrooms through teaching and learning, supporting attendance and punctuality and further developing our positive cultures in behaviour and attitudes.

The theme of high challenge with high support fed through into my assemblies with students, connected with the importance of 'community' within our school. We have raised further our standards and expectations this year, in all aspects of school, building on the work that we undertook in the last academic year. Of course, this requires the support of all members of the wider school community, including Parents and Carers, and I thank you in advance for this to support us in continuing to drive up standards.

The first few days of school, as you would expect, have been calm, positive and purposeful.

There are some adjustments that are being made, for example, to follow up where expectations are not being met, and later in this briefing some of these will be explained. Monitoring will occur, and where further changes are required these will be made. Some changes will be brought in straight away, whilst other things will feed through over the coming weeks.

IMPROVING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There has been a significant amount of investment into the school environment over the summer holidays. Main reception has been completely refitted to provide a brighter, more vibrant environment. Likewise, the Theatre reception (used when we have productions) which doubles as a student entrance before school has had a make over.

Following feedback from the student leadership team last year, we have worked to bring an additional set of toilets into use for Key Stage 3 students to help increase capacity at breaks and lunchtimes.

Some of our PE changing rooms have had a complete refit, to provide an environment more befitting for our students and builds on the replacement of the new equipment in the gym last academic



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year. Our Art classrooms have had a full refit, with new flooring, painting and decorating whilst an ongoing cycle of improvements in corridors and other classrooms continues.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

We have a significant focus on reducing lost learning time that may occur through missing school, or being late to school and/or to lessons during the school day.

Students should be within the school building at their classroom ready for the start of the first period (8.40 on a Monday and 8.30 Tuesday to Friday). If a student is arriving through the school gates within the 5 minutes before those times, they are at risk of being late when the register is taken at the start of those lessons. Being in the building, but not at the classroom door does not mean that they are on time. If you drop your child off, please can you ensure that you allow sufficient time for them to walk down Parkside Terrace and be inside the school grounds by 8.35 Monday / 8.25 Tuesday to Friday at the very latest. If your child walks to school, please reinforce this with them. School buses usually drop off in good time, however, if your child chooses to go into the village after this, then they also risk returning late to school without close time keeping.

From this week, and after informing students during Coaching and assemblies last week, a child who is late to school will serve a 30 minute detention at lunchtime. This is to support improved punctuality in the morning.

If a student is marked as late to a lesson during the school day more than 3 times in a week, this will also result in a 30 minute lunchtime detention and an email to Parents/Carers to inform you of this fact. If a child does not attend the lesson within the specified time, this will count as truancy, and generate a lunchtime detention and communication home.

It is important that if you are informed that your child has missed learning, either through being late in the morning or during the school day, that you work to support us in promoting positive punctuality.

We have also changed our Student reception. This is now closed during lesson times to promote the minimisation of lost learning time, but is open before school and at break and lunchtime should students need to get information, such as their lessons for the rest of that day.

MOBILE PHONES

Students were also reminded within Coaching and assemblies about the importance of not using their mobile phones or earphones during the school day including at breaktime and lunchtime. Research is clear that taking this approach reduces the safeguarding risk to children that may come from inappropriate use of phones, for example through cyber bullying, taking pictures or filming without consent, alongside the fact that it distracts from the purpose of learning within a school environment and also does not always support the development of social and communication skills. We have not taken the step to ban phones from being brought to school as a number of our students use them to store bus passes and the like. However, we are clear that if they are brought to school they should be turned off and out of sight. If seen, mobile phones and earphones will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day. If this happens twice in one week we will instigate a phone contract. This, essentially, means that the phone is handed in in the morning and collected at the end of the day.

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If a phone is seen and your child refuses to hand the device in, this will be followed up with parental contact home and a phone contract put in place as a minimum.

Please can you ensure that you support your child to meet these basic expectations. We have processes in place should a child need to contact home that do not require the use of their mobile phone. If you need to contact your child urgently, then please use the school communication channels, otherwise please expect that any messages you may send will be picked up by the child at the end of the school day.

UNIFORM AND FOOTWEAR

As communicated at the end of the last academic year and over the summer, we have made some adjustments to our footwear expectations to help Parents/Carers and students know what is expected. Thank you to those of you that have supported this. It was disappointing to see some students that returned to school in footwear that doesn't meet the standard and contact is being made with those of you that this applies to, to support the rectification of this.

If you would like to see examples of footwear that is appropriate (and some examples that are not), then this can be seen on the website. Likewise, with regard to clothing - the uniform has been designed to be simple and easy to wear whilst supporting comfort and value. A reminder that certain items of clothing, such as leggings, are not part of the school uniform and, again, the pastoral teams will work with Parents/Carers of students who are not appropriately dressed for school to address this.

ARBOR

The move to Arbor means that some of our previous processes and systems related to the recording of rewards and incidents have changed. We have made some changes following the soft launch at the end of the last academic year, and will continue to review and evaluate. However, it does mean that information about your child is now consolidated into one place. You can access this via the Arbor Parent App / Portal and this should provide a much clearer picture rather than being across multiple platforms.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We have made some changes to the starts of our lessons to provide clearer routines and expectations to help students start each lesson promptly in a more uniform way. Do Now activities, which support the retrieval of previously covered material such as that which is required for that lesson, are being done in timed conditions on mini-whiteboards. This helps staff quickly identify the security of learning and respond accordingly, whilst also helping students in their own retrieval of learning - an important part of committing knowledge to their long term memory.

E&A

As communicated in the Principal's Briefing before the start of the academic year, Monday period 7 is our E&A curriculum. This has a different focus in Key Stage 3 (Engage and Aspire) to Key Stage 4 (Endeavour and Achieve). This was launched to students in assembly to help the purpose of the change to be explained and how it fits as part of our core curriculum.

COACHING

The arrival of our new Year 7s and some new staff in school, has resulted in each Coaching group community being adjusted from the end of the last year. This brings a new dynamic and feel to each group and it has been good to see how the students are getting to know the new members of each

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group. Again, in assembly, the role and purpose of Coaching was reinforced, with a reminder that it is a key part of building our culture as a school community. As you would expect, the same expectations of punctuality and attendance of course apply to both Coaching and E&A.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

Please be aware of a clarification in our administration of medicine policy. Staff will not administer any medication that has not been prescribed for that particular student by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist. Any non-prescribed medication will not be administered by school. **Students must not bring any non-prescribed medication into school and/or self administer this.** In the event of a student needing pain or fever relief then the parent/guardian must come to school and administer this themselves. Parents should also confirm that the student has not had any adverse reactions to this in the past.

This approach is not an unusual one in schools and is to support the safety of the student. It is not appropriate for students to be self medicating within the school and should staff see this occurring, then the medication (including paracetamol) will be confiscated and communication with a Parent/Carer made. I am sure that you will appreciate that we have no way of knowing with non-prescribed medication, how many a child may have taken and when and, therefore, this presents a significant safeguarding risk. Please ensure that your child does not bring any medication into school and/or self administer medication. Where it is prescribed, please ensure that the process is followed to support the safe keeping and administering of this. If you have any questions about this, please contact Chris Cariss via the usual channels, in the first instance. Thank you for your understanding and support in this matter.

CONTACTING SCHOOL

We do have a number of methods of communicating with school. Please choose the most appropriate method for your request.

EMAIL: Please use the main school email mail@parksideschool.net

IN APP MESSAGING: This can be done directly via the Arbor App

PHONE: You can call the main school reception for **urgent** matters only. Please choose an alternative method of communication for general or non-urgent queries.

SEN TEAM: email via inclusion@parksideschool.net

SAFEGUARDING TEAM: Contact via the main school phone number (01535 272 752)

ATTENDANCE: Reporting student absence - please contact school via the main school number, choose the relevant option and leave a Voice Mail. All Voice mails are picked up by the Attendance team.

PASTORAL TEAM / SUBJECT STAFF: Contact via the main school email in the first instance.

TEXT: You can respond to an SMS Text received from school, for example, for replying to an absence text.

MAIN RECEPTION: In person: Visitors onto school site should only be for pre-arranged meetings, picking up students during the school day, or emergencies. Please use other methods of communicating as an alternative to coming onto school site in person.

Kind regards

Robin Ghosal
Principal

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