



ACTON HIGH SCHOOL & CENTRE FOR MEDIA ARTS

18th October 2011

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to remind all parents and carers that our half-term break runs from Monday 24th to Friday 28th October. Students will be dismissed at the usual time on the last day of this half-term, Friday 21st October.

School resumes on Monday 31st October. To facilitate staff Inset there will be a late start to the morning. Students need to be on site at 9.40 am, ready to move to registration at 9.50 am. Lessons will start with period 2 at 10.00 am.

I would like to use this opportunity to give you a few reminders. Firstly, I would like to emphasise that our policy regarding mobile phones, MP3, iPods and similar devices, states that these gadgets must be switched off when students enter the building and should only be switched back on when leaving school. In an emergency, you can contact your child via reception. Staff will confiscate any gadget being used by a student whilst in the building. Parents often raise the issue of the vulnerability of expensive electronic gadgets in school, and, indeed, we have had a number of incidents this year already where expensive phones have been lost or stolen. Therefore, we would prefer if such items were not brought into school at all. If an individual chooses to bring a phone or similar device onto the school site, our policy clearly states that it is the responsibility of the individual to keep items safe. We are unable to spend large amounts of time investigating losses of these items.

As I noted in an earlier letter, I am delighted to see that the majority of students have chosen to wear our new school uniform ahead of the change over date in March 2012, and the great majority are doing so with real pride, and are presenting themselves very well. To support our efforts to ensure that students present themselves in a way that is appropriate for Acton High students, I would like to ask parents to emphasise to their children some key expectations about the way in which the uniform will be worn in school. These include the following:

- Shirts should be tucked into trousers
- Shirt collars should be buttoned to the neck and at the cuffs
- Ties should be knotted neatly and the knot should be at the shirt collar

A number of parents this year have asked about homework, and how it works in the school. This is always a challenging area for schools. However, we do have a homework timetable in place, which staff will be following, and we also have clear guidance for staff about how to set good quality and appropriate homework. We are currently starting a major review of homework and of how we can make it as easy as possible for parents to check that students are learning well and appropriately when they are at home. I have attached a handout to this letter that is designed to help

parents to support the effective completion of homework. Please use the school planner to communicate with staff if you have any concerns or questions about homework.

Finally, we have been speaking to students recently regarding conduct expected on dismissal from school. A number of students have narrowly avoided collision with motor vehicles on the Mill Hill Road while crossing the road carelessly in groups. This is of particular concern, as we know that roads are the most dangerous places that teenagers encounter in their lives: road accidents outstrip Aids, cancer or any other disease as the biggest cause of teenage death around the world (*The Lancet*). There have also been a few complaints regarding students dropping litter on Mill Hill Road, which gives, of course, a very negative message to residents about students' respect for the local environment. We have also received reports that some students have been purchasing fireworks and bangers from local shops. These items are, as we all know, extremely dangerous and have no place at Acton High, or in the streets or parks surrounding it. I would like to stress that any student found to be in possession of these items in school, or who has been identified as using these items within the local area on their way to or from school, can expect a very severe sanction.

We expect that students at Acton High will consistently demonstrate high standards of behaviour, both in school and out of school, and so we will be addressing some of these issues again with students in a series of assemblies during next half-term. We would appreciate your support in reinforcing the key message, which is that our students are already doing many things of which they, and those who work with them, can be very proud, and that we want everyone in the local community to see the best of Acton High whenever they meet our students.

I hope that you and your children have a very happy and relaxing half-term holiday, and look forward to welcoming the students back on October 31st.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andy Sievewright
Headteacher