

Y11 letter
September 2016

Dear (Parent salutation)

Student Name

Welcome back to a new and, we know you will agree, crucially important academic year.

Some of us are old enough to remember when it was the fashion to play down the importance of examination results. We were, and sometimes still are, told that schools had “more important considerations to devote time and energy to than simply passing tests”.

The world we inhabit is much more challenging than that of even 5 years ago let alone when we were at school and good examination results will empower students and enhance their quality of life, now more than ever. To afford GCSE’s any less than top priority and total respect is to do our young people a disservice.

Hard work and concentration is now vital for all Year 11 students and, whilst we will celebrate the GCSE grade achieved by any student who has done their best whether that grade be an ‘A’ or an ‘F’, it is imperative that none are allowed to under-achieve. Doing as well as possible at GCSE for all Year 11 students is therefore our number one target and everyone will be expected to play their full part.

Year 11 is not a year for half measures and settling for second best is not an option. This is the year when a maturity of approach to study and a sense of urgency and ambition bring their rewards. In addition to the formal examinations, there will be controlled assessments and mock examinations throughout the year, and we will be in touch in due course with further details.

The formal GCSE exams will take place between May and June 2016. **Please do not book holidays during this time as no examinations can be rescheduled to a later date.**

Students tend to feel that the rules apply less to them as they get older. This is perhaps natural, but it can and often does lead to a lessening of pace and challenge just at the time when students need to focus most. This is not a mistake that we will make here at Clifton and all students will continue to be expected to:

- Wear uniform properly at all times - top button fastened with the tie showing properly, no garish belts; footwear should be sensible, black shoes (no trainers/Timberland/Ugg boots), no canvas pumps or shoes with the laces unfastened. Please do not purchase canvas pumps or boots to be used at school. The central importance of this is misunderstood in many schools; it is far from trivial and it is not negotiable here at Clifton.
- Mobile phones are not allowed in school.
- Always be punctual (100%) and polite – there is no excuse for being late. Lateness is often an indication of disinterest in school and school work.
- Always come equipped and ready for work.
- Have an excellent attendance record - 100% attendance should be the norm. 95% attendance is the whole school target, but 95% attendance per student should not be regarded as “good” since it represents 2 full weeks off school. Holidays taken during term-time will not be authorised and you may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice issued through the Local Authority. Per child this would be £60 if paid within 28 days. Please ensure that you always ring school each and every day that your child is ill.
- Treat homework and coursework with the respect and urgency that they deserve.
- Meet all deadlines without needing to be reminded.
- Be organised and thoughtful about their work.

- Remember that they (the student) not the adults, are responsible for their own learning – learning is their job and students that do not attempt to engage in their own learning will find progress much more difficult.
- Treat the school buildings and furniture with respect and never bring or chew gum in and around school.
- Strive for an effort grading of “excellent” (often “good” will not prove good enough) in every subject and an effort ranking of no worse than 80/170.

We will continue to work hard to improve outcomes for our young people despite inevitable Government cuts to school budgets – already happening – and changes to curriculum and assessment. We will never let league table positions dictate what we do and, when there is a conflict between what is best for the school and what is best for the individual student, the needs of the student will always come first.

Our students always had the potential. Many now have the necessary belief and ambition to match their undoubted talent. The vast majority of them will soon have “High Expectations”. With your help we can truly enable them to leave this school “able and qualified” to thrive in an ever changing and challenging world. Being successful is, of course, a difficult undertaking for anybody but settling for second best should never be an option for this school or for these students.

Yours sincerely

David Hudson OBE
Executive Headteacher

Tony Hardcastle
Headteacher

Josie Webster
Head of Year 11

Some points to note:

- We continue to have an open access policy in school and students will be allowed inside the buildings at break times. They can bring sandwiches and they can take advantage of our cashless lunch arrangements. However, they are not allowed to go off site at break times as we cannot guarantee their safety if they do.
- We would be grateful if you could regularly check and sign your child’s planner. Your Head of Year is Miss Webster.
- Too many of our students are coming to school having had little or no breakfast and a significant number are calling at a shop and buying sweets and high energy fizzy drinks. The sugar overload that they regularly put into their bodies will often severely inhibit their ability to learn and/or to behave and all parents should exercise control in this area.
- Communication via social media is on the rise, and sites such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram are regularly used by many of our students. When used appropriately, these are useful tools for communication and even learning. This said, they are open to misuse. Some people feel that they can make cruel and malicious comments on public forums or via messaging services about others, saying things they would never dream of saying in person. We at Clifton see this for what it is: bullying. We cannot, and will not, accept this.

We therefore require your support as parents in regularly checking your child’s phone and social media output. We’d also suggest that you check who they ‘allow’ to view their pages, or who they are ‘friends’ with to ensure that they can only message, or receive messages, from those they are actually friends with.

- We have enclosed a data collection sheet for your child. Please check this carefully and if there are any amendments to the information please return this sheet to school with the amendments clearly indicated. This should be returned to school marked for the attention of the ‘data Office’.
- An important date for your diary is 29th September. This will be our annual form tutor evening, which will be an invaluable opportunity to come and meet your child’s form tutor and discuss their effort, attendance and progress. Your child’s form tutor will be in touch with you very soon to make an appointment with you for this evening at a mutually convenient time.

Enc (s):
Data Collection Sheet