



19<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are coming to the end of Autumn Term and I wanted to update you on a few important areas before the Christmas break.

Thank you to all the parents with whom I have had conversations over the past few weeks about the Ofsted outcome. For those I have not had chance to speak to, there is a page on our website (<https://www.melbournvc.org/about-us/Ofsted.php>) explaining our journey as a school as we address the issues Ofsted/our staff/ students and parents have identified. A list of frequently asked questions with a response is also included, which I hope you will find helpful.

During my conversations with parents, I have been asked some challenging questions about our provision as a school. My team and I are committed to making the school a better place for students to successfully reach their potential and we recognise that this is a journey. The school needs to continue to improve with the support of parents. I am really pleased that many parents have recognised the positive work the school is doing with the benefits we are beginning to see for our students.

## Behaviour

One useful gauge of behaviour is the reflections of visitors. Recently we have hosted events run for a wide mixture of visitors who have significant experience working a wide range of schools in a variety of contexts with their reflections of their time working with our students being:

- 'Behaviour was impeccable'.
- 'What great students'
- 'Pupil behaviour was good'

Behaviour is always a significant issue in schools, but we can see through the tracking system we use, which staff are using more consistently, that the behaviour of our students is becoming less negative and more positive.

A particular area of focus is on students' behaviour outside of lessons during session change overs. We have called this '**safer corridors**' – this is a time when students are largely unsupervised as they move around the site from one lesson to the next. Another area is students' behaviour during cover lessons. As with any organisation we have staff illness and absence and as a parent and educator, I know the impact of when a teacher is absent, particularly for an extended period of time. Actions are being taken to address student behaviour choices in cover lessons as our capacity continues to grow.



## **Staffing**

I am pleased to say that we are more fully staffed with teachers this academic year. Although we did have some vacancies amongst our Associate (non-teaching staff). Unfortunately, when we started in September, vacancy (Spanish) unexpectedly arose and since then, two other members of teaching staff have been absent for personal reasons. This term, we have employed (two potentially, who are still in training) more teaching staff who will start in January with changes to timetables being completed next week with the ambition that students and parents will be informed of these changes before the end of this term.

With the support from the Trust, we have been able to create additional vacancies to support our work. This is in part why we have employed 11 new staff this half term alone.

**Parents have asked how they can help –please do share our posts regarding staff vacancies amongst your own social networks.**

## **Duke of Edinburgh Award**

Unfortunately, the previous lead of this award (Mr Kennedy) left Melbourn Village College and I would again like to thank him for supporting so many students to join/complete the levels in this scheme. I am pleased to report that we have employed a new colleague who will work solely on this award between Melbourn Village College and St Peter's School. They will be supported by experienced colleagues, the awarding body itself and the organisation we use to support expeditions. Initially our new colleague will focus on those students who want to complete the award they have started with the aim being to launch the award to new students (current year 8 and 9) in the Autumn term next year.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Naturally, as a school this is our core purpose and one, we are very much focused upon. For example, a strategy we have worked hard to embed across the school is 'retrieval practice.' This could take the form of students being asked questions at the start of class, not only about the work/topic they did last lesson but last weeks or even last year. The aim is to encourage the embedding of knowledge.

Another strategy which is firmly in place is requiring students to give full oral answers to questions not just simple 'yes' or 'no.' This is to encourage students to think about a response, ensuring they have a reason for their reply, with the aspiration that in a written examination students will naturally give a full subject specific answer. This is due to there being a strong link between a student's oral and written literacy skills.

## **Reporting**

We are altering our arrangements for reporting the progress of students at the end of each term. We have to decouple Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) from Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). This essentially means we have to find a different 'metric' to report students learning to parents, as we cannot use a GCSE style grade. This decoupling is a strategy from the Department of Education as reported on by Ofsted. It does still mean that schools have to teach a curriculum that is at least as broad and ambitious as the National Curriculum. It does mean we need to change how we report a student's progress. Therefore, for this term's report we will use percentage as the metric, i.e. the proportion of the expected learning a student has demonstrated as understanding. More details will be sent to you soon.

## **Parental communication**

I know we need to increase the quality and quantity of communications with you all. Many parents have recognised that communication from the school itself has increased through more staff being employed e.g. each year group having a pastoral support officer and more administration staff. I appreciate more parents would like to have time with members of the senior team and I thank these parents with whom I have spoken, who recognised time is a significant constraint.

I am really pleased we are setting up our 'Parent Panel' for next year and I thank those of you who have volunteered to join. We had a great response and by the end of term, the parents who have been randomly selected to be part of our parent panel, not through representing a particular group of students e.g. year group/Young Carers, will be contacted with an invite to the first meeting which will be in early February. I am also looking to offer a 'surgery' style period of time during the normal school day to which parents can book in a twenty minute appointment (either in person or online) to discuss a particular issue with a member of the senior team. Please respond to Mrs Barr ([lbarr@melbournvc.org](mailto:lbarr@melbournvc.org)) if you would be interested in attending such an opportunity.

In addition, our parent governors offer a valuable link between our parental body and the school's leadership. The details of our governors can be found on our website. I know the governors are very open to being contacted and discussing the work of the school and what we are trying to achieve together.

This has been a fairly lengthy communication, but certainly contains many important updates, with lots more details on our work available as indicated via our website.

Thank you for your support and I hope you enjoy a restful and safe holiday period with your family and friends.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Bennet', written in a cursive style.

Mr C Bennet  
Executive Head Teacher