

November 2017

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A University of Kent Academies Trust School

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to thank you all for your support over this past term, and for welcoming the prospect of the changes to come so that CGSG quickly regains its reputation as a school at the forefront of learning, and a place where students and parents/carers have the opportunity of influencing the school's future direction.

It has been good to meet and talk to so many of you at the various individual year group events that took place in term one; the Year 7 Consultation Evening with Personal Tutors, the Year 11 Curriculum Information Evening and the Sixth Form Options Evening. Many of these conversations have been very useful to me in finding out the views of parents/carers and where you see the strengths of the school, and also where you would like to see change. Regular communication comes out as the number one priority for improvement, and I hope that you will quickly see that the responses from the school to you are faster and more effective than has previously happened. In addition we will be issuing a newsletter three or four times a year in order to share and celebrate with you, the many successes of our students and the school.

Year 11

The Year 11 Curriculum Information Evening held in September set out the key challenges ahead for our students and how parents/carers can support their child in the months ahead. The new reformed and much harder GCSE exams will mean that our Year 11 students will need to be organised and well prepared for the new exam papers. As you may realise students will no longer receive A*-G GCSE grades in most subjects but will be given a numerical grade 9 to 1 (with 9 being the equivalent of an A*). We are working hard with the subject teacher teams to focus on the best way to accelerate and enhance student progress so that students can achieve their targets in each subject area, giving them the best opportunity to be accepted onto the advanced level courses on offer in the CGSG Sixth Form, part of the University of Kent Academies Trust Sixth Form. Thank you to Mrs Grimes (Assistant Principal and Year 11 Strategy Leader), Mrs Foreman (Head of English), Mr Holden (Head of Maths) and Mr Stride (Science Professional Mentor), who shared the key course detail and the assessment requirements in their subjects. Mrs Grimes will be organising in the coming months further sessions on how parents/carers can help their child organise themselves and revise effectively. In addition, Mrs Grimes will also be contacting some parents/carers and students individually, where she feels that additional support may be required.

Post 16 Provision from September 2018

The University of Kent Academies Trust launched its Sixth Form Information Evening at the end of term one. This was a very well attended event and set out a wide curriculum offer to all students. It was held in the Pilkington Building at the University of Kent, Medway Campus. We hope those of you that attended found the evening informative and we would be grateful for any feedback that you may have. The University set out its offer, that will provide additionality to our Sixth Form students' studies, distinct from other schools' offers, as they enter the Sixth Form next year. This will include graduate mentor/ambassador support in lessons and tutorials, support with University applications through UCAS (including interview practice), support with writing personal statements, visits to their campuses in this country and in Europe, as well as support from University academics from their Schools of Learning - ensuring students are at the forefront of the latest research (which will aid their academic studies). I would like to extend my thanks to the staff who delivered individual sessions on their subject area or who personed the various subject specific stalls. The University wish to make it clear to all parents/carers that the sponsorship of CGSG is not about students coming to the University of Kent for their higher education studies but to support students' aspiration in moving on to any HE provider or entering the workplace. Please do contact Mrs Wolfe, Deputy Director of the UKAT Sixth Form at CGSG, if you have any questions regarding the future Sixth Form offer.

Current Post 16 Provision

Benefits of University sponsorship have already been making an impact. Our current Year 12 students have worked with Jane Anderson, from the University of Kent Partnership Office, discussing the transition into Post 16 studies, with its focus on developing higher level independent study skills and organisation. This was followed up with a trip to the University Medway Campus. The students had the opportunity to have a tour of the facilities, speak with students ambassadors, listen to a motivational speaker and begin considering their choices for their future pathways after school.

Year 13 Chemistry students had the opportunity of spending a day working with Dr Vladimir Gubala, in his laboratory at the Medway School of Pharmacy. Whilst there, the students were able to be involved in a practical experiment, making and analysing Aspirin using a mass spectrometer.

Physical Education

We have some early PE successes to report when we entered the Badminton Secondary School Games Competition for the first time. Our Key Stage 4 team won every single game and came home with gold medals and a trophy. Congratulations and well done to our fantastic team comprising Amy, Emily, Elise and Sandhya. They played Rainham Girls, Rainham Mark Grammar, Strood Academy and the Thomas Aveling School. Each game consisted of 2 singles matches and 3 doubles matches. We have high hopes that they will perform just as well in the Kent Finals in February.

Open Evening and Day Events

We welcomed 300+ families to CGSG for our Open Events last term. Thank you to all our students who volunteered as tour guides, department helpers or parking assistants – they were great ambassadors and showed great pride in being students at CGSG.

Many visitors commented on their enthusiasm and their great communication skills. Special thanks to Chloe in Year 7 and Rebecca our Head Girl, who gave their own perspective on their experiences at CGSG in the presentation in the main hall. All of the feedback from our visitors focused on how friendly, polite and informative our students and staff were. Thank you to all students and staff for showcasing the best CGSG has to offer.

Staff Recruitment

As outlined in previous letters, in line with the national and local picture, and in particular in the South East, recruitment of high quality teaching staff is still very difficult. I know that last year many parents/carers and students were frustrated at the number of supply staff at the school. This situation has slightly improved, although there are still some issues in Science and English. We are trying to recruit permanent high quality staff as quickly as possible - staff that will enthuse and motivate our students and bring a new sense of energy and drive - contributing fully to the current staff team here at CGSG. UKAT are therefore putting together a recruitment package to attract teachers to come and work at CGSG. As with any change of strategic direction, some current members of staff have decided to move on to other schools and we will be endeavouring to recruit to their positions as soon as possible. We have some great committed teachers currently on our staff team and I know they are doing all they can to provide the best possible learning experience for our students. I know recruitment issues worry all parents and students and we will try to keep you informed if your child is affected by any long-term staff absence that might arise. I can promise you that we are doing everything we can to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Indeed as you may know the University has already set up a bespoke teacher training programme to ensure future succession planning for recruiting teachers particularly in the shortage subject areas of Science, Maths and English. If you have any worries please do contact me personally.

Lockers

Thank you for your patience with student lockers. We have been able to resolve all the issues during the term so there has been no need to have all the keys back in as was previously stated.

Visits

Mrs Parsons, Subject Leader of Geography, has led the first international visit of the year to Iceland. Other trips to Barcelona and Paris are to follow later in the year.

Term Two Future Events

We start this term with the first of our formal exam weeks for all students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12. These exams will be taken during their lessons and test students' learning from term one, and from last year (where applicable). Year 11 and 13 mock exams will follow commencing on Monday 13th November. We would be grateful for your support in encouraging and supporting your child through these weeks.

There are also parent/carer consultation evenings on:

- Wednesday 15th November 4pm – 7pm for Year 10
- Thursday 7th December 4pm – 7pm for Year 11

More details will follow about how to book appointments for these evenings.

Parent Governors

The Clerk to Governors, Caroline Jennings, will be writing to you in the next two weeks on how to apply to become a parent governor. There will not be a formal election but parent/carers will be invited to put themselves forward to serve on the Governing Body based on a skills audit. The Department for Education wish Governing Bodies/Trustees to complete a skills audit so that the governance of an academy can draw on a vast array of skills required for modern strategic leadership of multi academy trusts. All skills audits and letters of application from interested parents/carers will be submitted to the Chair of the UKAT Trustees and to the Members so that they can best match against the requirements needed by UKAT. I do hope that many of you will consider this vital role.

I hope that you have all had a restful October break and are looking forward to the term ahead.

Kind regards

Wendy Walters
Principal