

RIPLEY ST THOMAS

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

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5 September

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back! I hope you have had a good summer and enjoyed the unusually warm weather. I include in my letter today quite a few updates and reminders at the start of our new academic year – please forgive the length of this letter!

It was a joy to welcome our new Year 7s on Friday and Years 8-12 today. Our Year 13 students return tomorrow and we're looking forward to seeing them. Thank you for sending your children in looking so smart and ready for learning. We're having assemblies this week to remind our young people of our routines and to introduce them to our new vision statement and values which they helped shape at the end of the last year, along with staff and governors.

I hope you like the rewording of our vision statement and the core values that we have chosen to represent who we are as a church school as well as drawing on our history and heritage.

Our vision and values

*'And now these three remain: **faith, hope**
and **love**. But the greatest of these is love.'*
1 Corinthians 13:13

Faith | Hope | Love | Service

As a Christian community, we aim to provide an education which enables all members of our Ripley family to flourish academically, personally and spiritually. Through acts of faith, hope and love, we encourage our young people to live well, to serve others, and to make a difference in the world.

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Staffing Updates

We are joined by a number of new staff this term and we give them a warm welcome to our Ripley family:

1. Ms Rebecca Archer – MFL maternity cover
2. Ms Alexia Barnes – Assistant Principal KS4 & Drama
3. Mrs Gemma Barton – Subject Leader Computing
4. Mrs Lindsay Benson – Teacher of Music
5. Mrs Alison Brookes – English maternity cover

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Principal Mrs C. Walmsley
Chair of Governors Mrs S. Farrimond

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6. Mr Thomas Burrow – Asst Progress Leader
7. Miss Emma Carson – Teacher of Maths
8. Mr Neil Carter – Teacher of Geography
9. Mr David Gordon – Teacher of RE
10. Miss Alanis Jackson – TA
11. Mrs Samantha McCulloch – Science Technician
12. Mr Ian Meeks – Teacher of Science
13. Mrs Kelly Norman – TA
14. Miss Michelle Pearson – TA work experience
15. Miss Rachel Sandbach – Teacher of Art / D&T
16. Miss Beth Stainsby – Asst Progress Leader
17. Mother Carrie Thompson – LS admin
18. Mr Andrew Werner – D&T technician

Also, Mrs Jackie Garnett has stepped down as Chair of Governors as her term of office has come to an end. At the end of term, we were able to thank her for her service to school, along with Mrs Val Wilson who retired as Vice Chair. I am delighted that Mrs Sue Farrimond has been appointed as our new Chair of Governors. Sue has years of experience in education, both in primary and secondary as well as in teacher training.

Building updates

We have had lots of site projects on the go over the summer, including a huge investment in a new toilet block in our main building. This is in response to pupil feedback about the toilets and some of the challenges we had with supervision around a large and disparate site.

I hope you will agree that this new facility is a great addition – a clean, bright and airy space which will have staff on duty at all times and which will be regularly cleaned. The entrance is open for easy supervision with one side for boys and one for girls, separated by a partition. The cubicles in each corner are all access and all have floor-to-ceiling partitions. We have also kept some individual all access toilets around the site for those who need to leave lessons with a toilet card or in an emergency.

I hope our pupils will appreciate these new facilities and that they will look after them.



Communication with school

I have attached a copy of the communication policy to this letter as a reminder of our procedures. Please note that Parentline is the main method of communication. This is accessed from the school website. Messages are triaged when they are received and the relevant staff member receives your message promptly and will respond quickly if the message is urgent. Most messages are responded to well before the 5-day deadline. It is at this point that staff are issued a reminder if they have not replied.

All pupils have a journal which you can also use to write notes to your child's progress (form) tutor.

If there is an emergency, please do telephone the school rather than use Parentline. We are a very busy school and staff are involved in looking after large numbers of children from early in the morning. Please do not telephone asking to speak to someone immediately or arrive in school asking to see a member of staff without an appointment. Please be assured that we want to work with you and will respond to any issues quickly, however it is not always possible for teachers or pastoral and senior staff to take a phone call or come to the gate immediately.

Attendance

As you are no doubt aware, there is a direct link between attendance at school and making progress in all aspects of a child's education. To ensure our pupils are successful, we set an attendance target of **at least 97%**. This equates to no more than five school days of absence in one academic year.

We will become concerned if your child's attendance is below 95% across the school year.

If attendance reaches the point of close to or **below 90%**, this is defined as persistent absence by the Department for Education. At this point we would be requesting you visit school for a meeting as soon as possible to ensure there is support in place to improve your child's attendance.

We encourage you to make dental and medical appointments outside of school time as much as is possible. If your child is unavoidably not able to be in school, then please leave a message on our absence line 01524 64496 – Option 1 as soon as possible on the morning of absence.

May I also take this opportunity to remind you of the importance of punctuality. We expect all of our young people to be at their tutor room by **08:45** and therefore advise that pupils are within the school grounds by the time the first bell sounds at **08:40** in a morning. If pupils are not at their tutor room by 08:45 they will be marked as late and issued with a lunchtime detention.

Term time absence and holiday requests

If you do need to apply for a leave of absence, please send in the form which can be found on the school website. Please note, I am unable to authorise term time holidays requests apart from in truly exceptional circumstances. During the past two years, I have not been issuing penalty notices for unauthorised holidays due to COVID disruptions, however please be aware that from this year we will be returning to issuing penalty notices in line with local authority guidance.

The Bay Learning Trust Reading Canon

Working in partnership with the other schools in our Trust, a significant investment has been made in purchasing sets of books to use in a new form-time reading programme. The Trust Reading Canon consists of twenty books, from which each school has selected fourteen for pupils in Years 7-11 to read in forms throughout the year (three for each year group, with two in Year 11). Starting in the next week, pupils will begin to have the first of these books read to them by their form tutor, whilst they track the text with a ruler or bookmark. This gives pupils the chance to hear fluent reading being modelled by an adult for stories which may otherwise be too advanced for their current stage of reading. The Reading Canon will form an important part of our approach to reading within and alongside the curriculum to further promote a reading journey which will continue throughout pupils' time in school, and into and through adulthood.

Parent Meetings

During this term, we will be hosting a series of parent meetings which give you a chance to come into school to meet some of the senior staff and speak to your child's progress tutor. Please look out for communication from Mr Goddard regarding this.

Uniform

We are asking for donations for pre-loved uniform. If you still have uniform, including PE kit, which your child has grown out of but that is in good condition, please considering donating it to school for our 'Swap Shop' and our uniform cupboard.

There will be an opportunity to bring items to donate or to swap at our parents' information evenings so please bring any items with you.

There is also 'The Uniform Project' at the Morecambe Food Bank which offers uniform to those who need it, so please consider donating there as well. There is a self-referral form on their website if you need any items and would like some support with this.

Cadets

Due to the popularity of our CCF here at Ripley, we are in need of volunteers to help out. It would be a real shame if the cadets were not able to continue due to a lack of adult involvement as our children get such a lot from their experience – hence my plea to you! If you could give some time to support that would be really appreciated – ideally on a Tuesday afternoon with some help on occasional weekends. Please do get in touch with Mrs Atkinson or Mr Quarry via Parentline if you are able to help.

I hope the first week goes well for your child(ren) and I will be in touch with my Principals' newsletter once a fortnight to keep you updated. Thank you, as ever, for all your support.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs C Walmsley
Principal