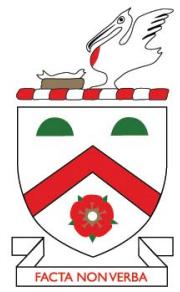


FRED LONGWORTH HIGH SCHOOL



November 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

Now that we have been in the new school building for just over two weeks, I am taking this opportunity to provide you with an update on the new school building and a number of changes that we have made to our routines and systems. The school building is a fantastic learning space and we're now beginning to settle in and take full advantage of it.

Year Group Zones

Students are now divided into year group zones during social times. In terms of the management of student behaviour during social times, zoning students allows us to supervise the students and the site more effectively which in turn, has a positive impact on the overall behaviour culture in school. This is considered highly effective practice, and it is a behaviour management strategy that is being adopted by a number of other schools. The strategy is also particularly important to us right now because it is helping us to manage a site with a temporary lack of space caused by ongoing construction work. The zones are as follows:

- Year 7 and Year 8 access the space at the front of the school.
- Year 9 and Year 10 access the space to the rear of school.
- Year 11, as the most senior year in school, have access to all zones.

Parents should be aware that each zone also contains a large canopy which serves as shelter for students in inclement weather. This is a significant improvement on what was previously available to us. In the previous building we had very little shelter for use when the weather was poor.

If students do not wish to remain in their supervised zones or use the canteen, there are a range of activities to engage students at lunchtime. PE, Music, Dance, Drama and the Library all offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities and students have access to the astro pitch to play football which is also fully supervised.

Canteen Use

We are now very fortunate to have a much larger canteen space than previously. We are still working out the most effective way of managing the canteen in terms of queuing and seating. We currently have two sittings at lunch time and the arrangements are as follows:

Year 7 Community Dining. We introduced Year 7 Community Dining in September in the old school. This is how it works. During form time on Monday morning, students pre-order their meals for the week ahead. Then, at the start of each lunchtime, Year 7 students will be brought into the canteen to be seated in their forms and this also includes students who bring a packed lunch. We encourage them to politely pass each other their food, enjoy their meal and once they have finished, to clear up their tables. We do this to encourage positive socialisation between students. Community Dining has made a significant difference in reducing the amount of litter on the school

site and, is a strategy that is contributing to extremely positive behaviour in the year group. Once community dining is over, students exit the canteen into their zone for the remainder of the lunch period.

We currently do not have the capacity to facilitate the community dining experience for the other year groups in school. Year 10 have their lunch at the first sitting which starts at 1:20. They can either eat their lunch in the canteen or take it into their zone. Years 8 and 9 have their lunch at the second sitting which begins at 1:30. Again, they can either eat it in the canteen or in their zone. We are finding that in our new canteen, all students have finished dining by around 1:50. Service has been speeded up significantly by the use of facial recognition at the tills.

Once the sittings are over there are no zones or restrictions in the canteen. We allow any student to sit in the canteen space and enjoy it, and especially when it is raining.

Year 11 of course have the privilege of leaving site at lunchtime but they can access the canteen if they wish to remain on site. As to whether this will continue in future years, a decision is yet to be made.

We are continually monitoring the canteen and looking for ways to improve the dining experience for our students; through the Student Council, we will be seeking feedback about the canteen and about all the changes we have made recently.

Line-Ups and Lesson Transition.

The new building consists of three floors and three sets of stairwells that must be accessed by 1,300 students. We have to think very carefully about how this number of people enter and exit the building safely and swiftly. To help manage movement and to ensure a calm and orderly environment, at the start of each day, in a designated outside space, each student lines up with their form group and the form is then brought into the building by their tutor. The Year 7, 8 and 9 Line-Up Areas are covered so that Line-Ups can continue when it is raining. If it is raining heavily, we do not expect Years 10 and 11 to line up outside in the morning as their Line-Up Areas are not covered.

During the day, as students move around the building during lesson transition times, we insist that students keep to the left in the corridors and on the stairs, that they face forward and walk sensibly as they move around the site and building. Staff supervise all lesson transition times and will continually remind students of what is expected. At the end of break and lunchtime, Year 7 and Year 8 only will line up before entering the building. As well as helping manage movement into the building, these additional Year 7 and Year 8 Line-Ups help to calm students and settle them ready for the next lesson. We are looking to extend the break and lunchtime Line-Up Routine to Year 9 in the coming weeks.

Last year we introduced a Lates Detention System. This is also part of our movement strategy. The detentions are used to discourage students from not getting to lessons on time. The majority of our students respond positively during movement time and get to lessons on time. I am sure that all parents would agree, good punctuality is an important life skill and this is why we insist on it.

As I have mentioned in previous letters about the new school, we now have to keep under review all the timings within the school day. Should any changes need to be made, I will communicate them with you along with the rationale behind them.

Toilets

The toilet situation in the new building is a significant improvement from what we have had previously. The new toilet blocks are comprised of separate boys' and girls' cubicles. Boys are on the left and girls on the right. The toilet doors are from floor to ceiling and the distance from the boys' section to the girls' section is significant. Running down the middle of each toilet block there is a sink area with boys' sinks on one side and girls' sinks on the other. The boys' sinks are separated from the girls' sinks by a dividing wall which is below head height. This is a standard design for toilets in new school buildings and they are designed in this way to allow for effective staff supervision. I am sure that no parent would want groups of students congregating in cubicles or toilets to vape or engage in other forms of anti-social behaviour which can be particularly intimidating to other students. Staff are on duty around the toilets at break and lunchtime. There are also CCTV cameras monitoring the communal entrances to the toilet blocks. There are no cameras focused on toilet doors or changing rooms, and the use of our CCTV system across school has been approved by our Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioners Office.

In terms of student access to toilets during lesson time our policy remains largely unchanged. As a rule of thumb, we do not allow students out of lessons to use the toilet. Remember we are a school of 1,300 students. If we freely allowed students to access the toilets during lessons, we would have some students that would take advantage of this to avoid lessons or to engage in anti-social behaviour, which in turn will cause disruption to lessons and impact on all children. There are always exceptions to this rule; we have some students with genuine medical reasons who are allowed to use the toilet without any restrictions and our staff can and do discreetly use their professional judgment in other circumstances as well. We have introduced a new code on Satchel One. Should a child use the toilet in lesson time, the teacher will issue a T I code. This allows you as parents to see if your child has missed part of a lesson by going to the toilet. The code also allows us to monitor toilet usage and to see if there are any students who may be deliberately trying to avoid lessons by repeatedly going to the toilet during the day. We will of course only follow up on genuine concerns and where we see patterns.

I am conscious that there will be some parents who may not agree with all of these strategies. I hope you take this letter in the way that it is intended, which is to be open and honest about the changes we have made and the rationale that sits behind them. If you are unsure, I would ask that you consider the following from Tom Bennet. Tom Bennet is one of the lead advisors to the government and the DFE on effective behaviour management in UK schools. My senior team have had the pleasure of working with him in devising our systems:

"It [behaviour management in schools] is like the Highway Code: without a shared understanding of how we conduct ourselves, the roads would be chaos. No one flourishes in chaos apart from the mean, the viscous, the opportunistic, the predatory"

"People who criticise schools when they are trying to do the right thing misunderstand that what they are actually advocating is an environment where children suffer educationally, physically and mentally."

Tom Bennet OBE, March 2023

Over the course of the coming months, you will have the opportunity to come into school and see the new facilities for yourselves. There are currently significant restrictions on site which do pose some temporary issues, lack of parking being one. I ask that you bear with us at this time. Restrictions should start to ease in the Summer Term.

We are proudly an inclusive and comprehensive school and ultimately, we want all students to achieve and be successful, regardless of their background or ability. To do this, we need a strong and positive behaviour culture in school. In the Summer of 2023, we achieved very strong outcomes for our Year 11 cohort; they achieved some of the best results in the borough. The behaviour culture that is established in our school and which we are continuing to develop, has played no small part in this success. For more vulnerable students, the routines and systems are particularly important as they provide consistency and certainty. As long as students and parents are willing to work with us, students will thrive in this environment.

Communication with school

I would like to thank our parents for the overwhelming support you show for the school. We always pride ourselves on our excellent reputation in terms of safeguarding, behaviour and outcomes, and we cannot stress enough the importance of strong school-parent partnerships. We do not correspond with parents on any issues concerning their child via social media, so if you do have any concerns that you need to raise, please do so using the appropriate channels of communication, which in the first instance should be your child's Head of Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P Davies', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Davies

Headteacher