



Date: 11th February 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to thank you for your support this half term. I have been pleased that school has been focused and settled during this half term period and that the vast majority of students are working well and making progress. As I have carried out the usual routine learning walks, observations and, through discussion with students on quite a regular basis, I am, largely, impressed with the way that students respond at Ruskin. They comment that they enjoy coming to school and that they know very clearly what is expected of them.

As parents may be aware, we meet every student immediately after a report has been issued to parents. These meetings take place before school and they are well planned, so that we have relevant information to hand. We also use it as a golden opportunity to hear student feedback and voice. The overwhelming response we get from students is that they appreciate and acknowledge not only the opportunities in lessons, but also booster sessions, intervention sessions and homework support. Please, do encourage your child to take everything that is on offer. There is no charge. I think it would be hard to justify not attending an intervention session but, occasionally, this happens. Please, support us.

For a few students, being at Ruskin poses some challenges. We continue to try to work proactively and positively with those students. This term I have asked that we plan an additional strategy, and this will commence after half term. When we return, there will be a centre set up for students who are not yet able to make enough progress in mainstream lessons. These students will therefore be educated full time in a different environment for at least half a term, where they will access a range of support to enable them to catch up. Those students involved are aware, and their families are aware. I will feedback to you on the success of this new initiative at Easter. Our current arrangements for the Remove Room and Support Centre continue.

This half term has been one of the busiest I can remember in terms of trips and extra curricular opportunities. There are so many I could mention, but I only have space to highlight a few. Regardless of this, thank you to all staff and students for participating and extending what we offer. I would like to mention our Expressive Arts Evening held this week: what a fabulous new event, packed with talented dancers and drama students, and some vibrant art work on display. The evening had a real buzz and a feeling of celebration and for that I have to thank Miss John and her team of staff supporters, under the direction of Mr Hartley and the Expressive Arts faculty. Thank you to parents for the absolutely amazing feedback.

Earlier this term, we held parent information sessions for Year 8 and 9 to discuss the changes to examinations and assessment. This was very well attended, and we were able to share our current position with regards to how future short and long reports might look. The evening was hosted at South Cheshire College and thanks to them for the use of their facilities.

Earlier in the week, Harley Crimes, Finn Butler and Miss Pownall were broadcasting on Signal Radio, talking about our response to Safer Internet Day. They sounded truly professional and discussed our school's strategies for internet and social media safety. I know that Miss Pownall was in awe of our two students and how quickly they took on the role of radio presenters! On the note of social media, please be vigilant with this. Day in, day out we hear of issues caused by social media and, occasionally, we bear the brunt of it in school.

We have hosted the Love Music Trust music competition event here recently, welcoming a range of Primary and Secondary choirs and ensembles through our doors. There was a fabulous evening of music and it was heartening to see how much music is going on in Crewe and in Cheshire East in general.

I look forward to attending the final.

We have been linking even more strongly with Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College this term. Students have visited Sandbach to consider sixth form opportunities, and they have been extremely impressed with the range of courses available at A Level. Moreover, the similarity between our schools in terms of pastoral care and that very important feeling of being 'known' and mentored both as a learner and as a person has been something that our visiting students have commented on. For sixth form provision, we do offer a school bus arrangement to support cost effective door to door travel! We also attended an English Orwell Youth Prize event at Sandbach High, facilitating some fabulous opportunities in creative writing.

As I write, the New York trip are en route. I saw them off very early this morning (something that I am slightly regretting now!), and everyone was very excited! What a fabulous opportunity – many of us will never have visited New York and so this is, potentially, a once in a lifetime experience. I have set up a twitter account for parents to follow so that I can feed information to parents during this trip. The twitter address is: @RuskinHigh

As always, whilst trying to share so many positives, I must give the usual reminders please. Over half term, please ensure you abide by uniform expectations when purchasing. School skirts are still causing some issues. Short, lycra stretchy skirts are not appropriate even when worn with thick tights. This issue was flagged up before Christmas and I explained that I would be considering a standard school skirt. I do not want to burden parents but, frankly, one or two students are spoiling it for the majority. Therefore, after half term if a student attends in an inappropriate skirt they will be given one chance to address it. If they do not do so, then they will need to be in school trousers for the remainder of the year. There will be no further warnings here. Thank you, in advance, for your support. I am sure I don't need to give lengthy reminders about hairstyles, shoes and so on. Please, refer to the planner if in doubt.

We have a long standing policy with mobile phones. No phone is to be seen or used or heard at any point on school premises. This works very well. However, on the very odd occasion, we are finding that a student might find a way to contact home if there has been an issue in school. This is unhelpful and not part of our policy. Therefore, please could I remind you of the expectation with regard to mobile phones. If the very small minority continue to abuse the policy, then I will have to think of additional measures. As parents, we need to be mindful of the impact of mobile technology.

In terms of attendance, please remember that the current expectation nationally is for 95% attendance. As a school, we aim for 100% for each student of course. Anyone falling below 95% is monitored and supported closely. If you feel that you require support with any aspect of your child's attendance, please do contact us.

As we develop as a vibrant and inclusive school, we continue to find ways to engage with our students and community members from overseas. Nearly 30% of our students are now dual language students, in that they have joined us from their home country and they are quickly developing their English language skills. What a fabulous opportunity for all of us. This is one of the things that is quite unique to us at Ruskin, and we are very proud of this. We are a harmonious community and it is always inspiring to see students of different ethnic backgrounds communicating brilliantly through spoken language and, sometimes, a bit of sign language! Being able to speak more than one language is a very valuable commodity and it is something that we are now looking to extend further in extra curricular ways. We are keen to develop further links with families from Eastern Europe and, as such, we have extended our parent drop in sessions on a Thursday afternoon so that we have a native speaker available to translate. Please, be aware that our drop in sessions are just that – and they are open to any parent who wishes to come and chat informally about any matter.

We continue on our journey to consider Academy status. Parents are aware that we have been consulting for some time about this. Now that we are a 'Good' school, we have more opportunities to consider. Therefore, I will keep you informed as matters progress. Whatever we decide, we will look to convert to an Academy as soon as possible in order to afford us additional freedoms for the benefit of our students. Whatever plans we have, they will be rooted in aspiration and collaboration and I feel sure that our parents will fully support this.

Please, don't forget that we have a Facebook account and Twitter. Our website also has a range of information on. Over the last couple of weeks, we have used Facebook, Groupcall and our website to send urgent communications with parents. This was particularly true last week when there was the potential for student and parent anxiety following an incident in Crewe. Overwhelmingly, the feedback from parents has been that they appreciated and benefited from the extended communication. Therefore, this is something I am considering developing. More information in due course.

As always, if you have any desire to contact me, my email address is brette@ruskin.cheshire.sch.uk

With very best wishes for a relaxing half term holiday. School dates are listed below for the rest of this academic year. Please read these carefully as I am aware that some schools have different arrangements in place.

Yours sincerely,



E S Brett (Mrs)
Headteacher

Please note: School returns on **Monday 22nd February, 2016** – Week 2 of the timetable.
The term 'parent' refers to parent/carer throughout this letter.

RUSKIN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL HOLIDAY DATES 2015/2016						
	DATE OF CLOSING			DATE OF RE-OPENING		
AUTUMN TERM BEGINS	*****			WEDNESDAY	2	SEPTEMBER
AUTUMN HALF-TERM	FRIDAY	23	OCTOBER	MONDAY	2	NOVEMBER
CHRISTMAS 2015/2016	FRIDAY	18	DECEMBER	TUESDAY	5	JANUARY
SPRING HALF-TERM	FRIDAY	12	FEBRUARY	MONDAY	22	FEBRUARY
EASTER	THURSDAY	24	MARCH	TUESDAY	12	APRIL
MAY DAY	MONDAY	2	MAY	TUESDAY	3	MAY
SUMMER HALF-TERM	FRIDAY	27	MAY	MONDAY	6	JUNE
SUMMER	TUESDAY	19	JULY	*****		

INSET: Designated staff training/preparation days:

Tuesday 1st September 2015
Monday 4th January 2016
Monday 11th April 2016
Wednesday 20th July 2016
Thursday 21st July 2016