

January 2012

Dear Parents & Carers

I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas break. We celebrated Christmas in style at Homewood with some wonderful events towards the end of the term. Our Year 7 students enjoyed their Christingle service at St Mildred's Church in Tenterden – the sight of all their candles alight as they sang Christmas carols made a great start to the Christmas season. I am sure those of you who were able to attend the Christmas Carol Concert in the Sports Hall will have been as impressed as I was with the quality of the performances, the live nativity including our farm animals, and the great contribution of the primary school children who joined us for the occasion. These events will become regular highlights in the Homewood year, so I do hope you will be able to join us for them next time.

Good News

We have received from Ofsted the analysis of our exam results in 2011. I am delighted to be able to tell you that the progress made by our Year 11 students was well above national average at GCSE. For the best 8 subjects including English and Maths, Homewood's value added score was 1012 against a national average of 1000. This means the students at Homewood made significantly better progress between Year 6 and Year 11 than students nationally. Students' performance in English was particularly outstanding with 78% of students making at least 3 levels of progress since Year 6, compared with 71% nationally. This is a magnificent achievement and we congratulate the Class of 2011 for their hard work and success.

We have also received a visit from our educational advisor who has reviewed the school's progress since the Ofsted inspection in November 2010. His report gives further confirmation that Homewood has made very good progress in all the Ofsted areas of focus. We are encouraged by this objective feedback which confirms that Homewood is moving swiftly towards our goal of becoming an Outstanding school under the new Ofsted criteria.

As usual at Homewood, there is plenty going on this term and I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of some of these events.

Parent Consultation Days

We started the term with two very successful Parent Consultation Days. Thank you to all those parents who came along to discuss your child's progress with their teachers. I hope you found the discussions useful and that you gained all the information you need to support your son or daughter with the next steps in their learning. The staff always find it very beneficial to meet with parents so that they can work more effectively in partnership with you to provide the best possible education for your child.

Thank you also to those of you who completed our questionnaire on communication with parents. This is an area we have been working hard on this year, and your feedback will be invaluable as we review the steps we have taken so far and decide what else needs to be done. In my next letter, I will share with you the outcomes of the survey and the plans we have to improve our communication with you still further. In the meantime, keep checking the web-site for all the latest information from the school, and we will continue to use e-mail, text messages, telephone and letters to keep you informed. At the same time, please get in touch with us if you have any concerns about your child or wish to speak to anyone at the school.

If you were not able to attend the Parent Consultation Days, you are welcome to make contact with your son/daughter's teachers if you wish to discuss their progress.

Options Evenings

These evenings are very important as they provide an excellent opportunity for you and your son/daughter to gather all the information you need to make choices about the next stage of the curriculum.

Year 8 Options

12 January 5.00 – 7.00 p.m.

Please sign in at the Sports Hall/Restaurant entrance. Students and parents will have individual appointments with members of staff to discuss their Year 9 course selection and talk about curriculum pathways for the future. There will then be a chance to look around all the department exhibitions to find out more from the subject staff about the courses on offer.

Year 10 Options and 6th Form Open Evening

19 January 5.00 – 7.00 p.m.

Please sign in at the bottom of T Block. Once again, there will be department exhibitions showing all the courses available to our students from September. Parents and students in Year 10 will be able to see the courses which start in Year 11. As these students will be staying on in full time education until at least age 17, this will give them a chance to think about their courses for the next two or three years. This will also be the opportunity for our own Year 11 students as well as those from other schools who want to join our 6th form to see all the opportunities available to those who spend their 6th form at Homewood. The range of courses and opportunities is the widest of any school in the area, and you will have a chance to find out more about all that is on offer. Full information about the courses available can also be found on the KentChoices4U website.

All students have had the Options process explained in assemblies, and there will be more information about the application process at both these information evenings. I look forward to seeing you at these important events.

Preparation for exams

There is of course a big focus for many of our students this term on preparation for exams. Extra revision classes are being run after school and on Saturday mornings for our GCSE students and revision material is being made available through Realsmart. The Maths department have prepared revision CDs for GCSE and A level students. Students should see Mr Priest if they have not received their CDs.

Many of the GCSE exams now involve controlled assessments and these are taking place during lessons over the next few weeks. Students will also take mock exams in order to prepare them for the style of examination they will face in the summer. We really appreciate your support throughout this period of preparation.

Attendance

Can I remind you again that we do not authorise time out of school during term time. We are very aware of the impact any absence can have on a student's progress and so we take a very clear stand on this. We would ask that you support us by ensuring that your child attends school every day unless they are actually unwell.

Uniform

The general standard of uniform this year is much improved and most of our students look smart and well dressed. This year, the new blazer is being worn by Year 7 and Year 8 students and this will include Year 9 from September. Thank you for your support in ensuring your son/daughter is appropriately dressed for school. Please can I remind you that piercings are not allowed, apart from discreet ear-rings, and students will be asked to remove them if they come to school with visible piercings. We place a strong emphasis on a team approach at Homewood and we want our students to be proud to uphold the high standards of dress and behaviour which is part of our ethos.

In summary, I would like to wish you and all our students a very Happy New Year. We have a great deal to look forward to at Homewood and I trust that 2012 will be another year of success and celebration for the Homewood team.

Yours sincerely

S J Lees
Principal