



Great Marlow School

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Monday 7th July 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers

Year 9 in to 10 Form Class and House Changes for September 2020

We are all very much looking forward to seeing Year 9 students in school next week. The advantage of returning to school, even for a short time, has been hugely beneficial. I know that it has given all members of staff a huge lift to see the school filling with students again: approximately 500 attended over the course of last week.

I am delighted that the Department for Education, in the most recent guidance, released their plans for September, which will allow schools to open, to those on roll, at the beginning of the new academic year. I can assure you that all staff will work incredibly hard to support all students in making up any ground lost during the pandemic lockdown and the time afterwards (from the middle of March to the end of this current academic year).

After considering how to best support students, we have decided to implement some important changes in September. For the past ten years or so, students in each year group have been divided into eight form classes, with two forms from each year group being part of one of the four established Houses. In September there will be nine forms in all year groups (Years 7-11); the creation of a ninth form means each tutor will have fewer students to register, allowing them to give more individualised support. Students may only spend 25 minutes in form time, but the form tutor plays a central role in monitoring academic progress, as well as tending to the social and emotional wellbeing of those in the group. Importantly, the form tutor is also a key point of contact for parents and carers.

Our reorganisation for Year 9 into 10 will see some students changing form classes and form teacher in September, as this cohort moves into Key Stage 4 to begin their GCSE courses. The details of the new forms will be explained to the students when they are in school next week. Any student who is not returning to school next week will be contacted separately.

It has been the case for the past few years that the House system requires a refresh; the creation of the ninth form makes it a perfect time to give this important feature of GMS a new impetus. From September there will be three brand new Houses, with three brand new House names. So, I am delighted to announce the launch of a historic competition, which I hope many students will take part in; every current student, plus those joining Great Marlow in September 2020 are invited to nominate names for the new Houses.

To enter, students just need to email their Director of Learning with a suggested name for each of the new Houses. Each name has to be supported by reasons, or rationale, stated succinctly in no more than 50 words. The closing date for all entries is 3.00 pm on Monday 13th July. It might be that one student is successful in suggesting the names of all three Houses, but equally, it might be the case that the House names are selected from the nominations of three different students. As well as the prestige and honour of being the one to name a new House, there will also be an appropriate prize.

Whilst considering these changes, one point that we have been cognisant of is the House colours and associated ties. We are retaining the colours red, blue and green for three of the new Houses. GMS will provide new ties for all students who are moved from one House colour to another.

I was particularly delighted this year that all students were given their first-choice option choices. As in previous years, all options subjects will be taught in mixed ability classes. However, from September, to provide greater flexibility in the core subjects, students will be set, within the House to which they belong. In this way, English, maths and science will be able to set students according to ability and aptitude: it will no longer be dependent on 'Bands'. This is an exciting change, as it opens access to the top sets for all students, in each core subject.

If you have any questions on the changes outlined in this letter, would you please contact Mr Ross, Director of Learning for Year 9, who will continue to be the Director of Learning for this year group in Year 10.

Best wishes

Kevin Ford
Headteacher