

14<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

I thought I would take the opportunity to write to you as we approach the halfway point of the academic year, to provide you with some important information, given that our next newsletter will not reach you until August.

### **Building works**

With regards the on-going incomplete building works following the unfortunate collapse of Carillion, it is hoped that by the time we return from our half term break, the new contractors will have signed the contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). I have been so proud of how the students have handled the disruption over the last four years. I would also like to extend my thanks to the staff who have persevered and found solutions to overcome the problems caused by the delay and the local community for its patience and understanding.

During the final phase of the building work, we will also be enhancing further our sports facilities with the development of two further netball courts as well as the permanent flood lighting of all of our multi use games areas.

These fabulous facilities will be available to hire by our community outside of school hours. For further information and cost enquiries, please contact our finance assistant Ruth Riman on 0121 588 8384 extension 108 or email at [ruth.riman@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk](mailto:ruth.riman@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk)

### **Parents' forum**

At the end of January, I was pleased to hold our first Parents' forum with a group of parents. This is an opportunity for parents/carers to help drive Phoenix onwards in an informal meeting with myself over coffee.

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am where we will be discussing options at Year 9 and changes to the behaviour strategy. Any parent/carer is welcome to join by contacting my PA Miss Motard.

### **Welfare and safety of our students**

As a school, the welfare and safety of our students is of paramount importance to us. However, I am increasingly concerned by the illegal and unsafe parking by parents and carers when dropping off or collecting their children. We are working with the Sandwell Safer Travel team in looking at ways to address this but I would appreciate if you could be more considerate when parking. Please also be aware that a number of parents have recently been fined for using the bus lane on Clarkes Lane, following photographs by a camera car.

One of the other issues that the school is dealing with at the moment is excessive use of consoles at home such as PS4 and Xbox. Unfortunately students are tired during the school day because of the amount of time they spend on them including excessively late nights. Due to the addictive nature of some of the games, students are also desperate to get home to get back on them which will be affecting the exam outcomes of some of our Y10 and Y11 students as they do not take up the offer of period 6 revision because they want to play on these game consoles. Please support the school by ensuring your child plays on these game consoles in moderation and prioritise their school work.

### **School funding crisis and petition** *(letter enclosed for further details)*

Please find enclosed a letter which most Sandwell schools are sending out to their parents this week. It highlights the impact the real terms funding cuts are having on the education of your child.

If you think the government should fund schools sufficiently and fairly, please show your support by adding your name to the petition 'Increase Funding for Schools', as well as encouraging family and friends to do so via the link mentioned in the enclosed letter.

In light of the ever-increasing financial constraints, we will only be issuing one school newsletter this year which you will receive in August.

### **County lines**

I have enclosed another letter at the request of West Midlands Police regarding County lines, a growing form of criminal activity that exists nationally and regionally across the West Midlands – *please see attached for further information.*



## Operation Encompass



The school has been given the opportunity to take part in a project that will be run jointly between schools and West Midlands Police.

Operation Encompass is reporting to schools, prior to the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has been exposed to, or involved in, any domestic incident.

Operation Encompass will ensure that a member of the school staff, known as a Key Adult, is trained to allow them to liaise with the local authority and to use the information that has been shared, in confidence, while ensuring that the school is able to make provision for possible difficulties experienced by children, or their families, who have been involved in, or exposed to, a domestic abuse incident.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our students and we believe this will be extremely beneficial for all those involved.

## School uniform and equipment

As you know, all students must be equipped with their uniform, which includes their jumper, blazer, tie, lanyard and school shoes. If any of these pieces are missing, please use this short holiday to replace these items. If students don't arrive at school with the correct uniform, they will be expected to borrow the uniform from school in the first instance. If they refuse, the school will be in contact with yourselves to support us in bringing in the correct pieces of uniform. Please be careful when purchasing school shoes and do not fall into the trap of clever advertising from sport shops trying to persuade you to separate with your hard-earned money in purchasing trainers rather than the school shoes that we expect here at Phoenix. Please see our website for more information. Your support with this is much appreciated.

## Rewards and extra-curricular activities

Our previous excellent award trips have seen us go to Alton Towers and to the cinema. The next termly award trip is now up for grabs. To be in with a chance of being selected, your child needs to have above 97% attendance and 97% punctuality for the spring term. They also need to be achieving a high number of positive reward points via Class Charts. Remember, you can keep up-to-date with your child's attendance, punctuality and conduct record by logging onto Class Charts either online or via the app. If you require your login details, please send your child to speak to Mrs Roberts, the Head of Willow House.

Phoenix also offers a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities which is available to all students, free of charge, and is aimed to provide them with opportunities to develop additional skills and attributes (*see enclosed programme for further information*).

## ParentPay

I would like to remind parents/carers that we are encouraging them to activate their ParentPay account as this is now the school's preferred method of payment, as part of our move to becoming a cashless school.

Note that school ties and replacement student ID badges are now available to purchase through ParentPay. Cash will be accepted for these items until the end of term but it will no longer be accepted for these after Easter so parents/carers will need to pay via ParentPay hereafter.

Please contact the finance office on extension 106/107 for additional information.

## Compliments

Finally as a society, we are all too quick to blame and complain and whilst we do have a clear school complaints policy in place for issues that can arise, I would like to introduce a way of recognising some of the exceptional work that our staff do for your children. Therefore, from after half term, there will be a staff recognition award form available on our school website for any parent/carer, visitor or student to nominate a member of staff for formal recognition. Please take the opportunity to share your child's success story or to compliment our staff.

Thank you for your on-going support and have a great half term holiday with your child/children.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Smith', written over a horizontal line.

Mike Smith  
Head teacher

14<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## SCHOOL FUNDING CRISIS AND PETITION

Dear Parent/Carer

As a school, we feel that it is our duty to provide parents with a fair and accurate picture of the real state of school funding in Sandwell. All state schools in England are funded by a grant from the Department for Education, but since 2010 school funding for each child has fallen by 8% in real terms (according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies). All this at a time of rising cost pressures on school budgets.

As a result, schools are having to make difficult choices on how to spend their limited funding, as their income has not kept pace with the rise in costs since 2010. All schools are working very hard to 'make ends meet' but this is becoming increasingly difficult and almost impossible. On average, for 2019/20 school funding in Sandwell will be cut by £13.3 million as compared to four years ago. This is an average of:

- £271 less per student
- £86,770 less per primary school
- £331,952 less per secondary school

(Source: [www.schoolcuts.org.uk](http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk))

As funding has become tighter, schools have had to cut back on:

- Teaching and non-teaching staff
- Support for more vulnerable students
- Small group work for children who need additional help in school
- Teaching resources and materials
- Subject choices in secondary schools
- The range of activities for primary pupils
- Repairs to buildings
- Renewal of equipment

There is also a crisis in funding for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

- Cuts to local authority budgets have affected the services they can provide to schools to support these children.

- Schools now have to fund the first £6,000 of a child's education, health and care support plan (EHCP) from the wider school budget, rather than receiving specific extra SEND funding.

From March 2018 there was a very small increase in funding for schools, however, this increase has gone nowhere near closing the gap between what our school receives and what our school needs to deliver the education all our children deserve.

**If you think government should fund schools sufficiently and fairly, please show your support by adding your name to the petition 'Increase Funding for Schools', as well as encouraging family and friends to do so, via the link below:**

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/232220>

(You will be asked to add some minimal information (name, email address, postcode) and then you will be required to confirm your email address by responding to the automated response sent to you.)

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and please support your children's future by signing the petition.

Yours sincerely



Mike Smith

Head teacher



Leigh Pepper

Chair of Governors



West Bromwich Police Station  
Moor Street,  
West Bromwich  
B70 7AQ

Switchboard: Tel 101

14<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

**Re: County Lines**

It is likely you will have heard the term 'County Lines' in the news recently. This is a real and growing form of criminal activity that exists nationally and regionally across the West Midlands.

To explain, it is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs from urban areas into rural areas. The leaders of these gangs are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults, often without them realising it, to move (and store) drugs and money. They use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

There may be signs of a change in a young person's behaviour such as:

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

Your school and local police are working together to spot signs of exploitation and ensure young people are safe. We're keen parents are aware and able to offer support.

I would ask that you be aware of County Lines and if you have any concerns about a young person or have any information regarding County Lines to contact West Midlands Police on 101. There are some links below that you may find useful for more information.

With kind regards

Sandwell Partnership Team

<https://www.fearless.org/professionals/resources/gangs>

<https://www.youandco.org.uk/crime-info/violent-crime-facts/gangs-and-street-violence>

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines>

<https://www.spurgeons.org/>



## Extra curriculum opportunities at Phoenix 2019

<b>Pre school</b>	Homework support A16 Library from 8:15 Literacy centre from 7:45 Art Club (Y10&11)	Homework support A16 Library from 8:15 Literacy centre from 7:45	Homework support A16 Library from 8:15 Literacy centre from 7:45	Homework support A16 Library from 8:15 Literacy centre from 7:45	Homework support A16 Library from 8:15 Literacy centre from 7:45
<b>Break /lunch</b>	Homework support Spanish Club Literacy centre Numeracy club Basketball Table tennis Health and social care club Library (collect a pass) Geography film club (Y7&8)	Homework support KS3 Polish club Literacy centre Numeracy club Basketball Table tennis Health and social care club Library (collect a pass) IT club Keyboard club	Homework support Literacy centre Basketball Table tennis Health and social care club Chess club Health and social care club Tech Club (Y7&8) Library (collect a pass) EAL Club	Homework support Literacy centre Numeracy club Basketball Table tennis Health and social care club Library (collect a pass) Art club (Y10&11) Textiles club IT club	Homework support Table tennis Health and social care club Library (collect a pass) EAL Club Tech Club
<b>After school</b>	Homework support A16 Library till 3:45 Numeracy Club Spanish club (Y9-11)	Homework support A16 Boxing Netball Y7 matches only Library till 4:00 EAL Extra English Numeracy club Italian GCSE & A level Spanish club (Y9&10) Health and social care club Vocal club Art Club (Y10&11) Sociology (Y10&11) Spanish homework club (Y11)	Homework support A16 Netball training Basketball Football Y8 Skipping Duke of Edinburgh Library till 4:00 Debating club EAL Extra English KS3 Art club Numeracy club Science club Health and social care club English homework club (Y10&11) Art Club (Y10&11) Sociology (Y10&11) Home Languages club Spanish homework club (Y11)	Homework support A16 Badminton Dance Football Y7 Cadets Library till 4:00 EAL Extra English Textiles and craft club Drama club Numeracy club Health and social care club Art club (Y10&11) Spanish homework club (Y11)	Homework support A16 Fitness Table tennis Library till 4:00 EAL Extra English Spanish club Y11 Numeracy club Spanish homework club (Y11)

- Please note Sports matches and tournaments are usually Tuesday and Thursday after school but the days can vary.