



# SYDENHAM SCHOOL

Specialist Science and Mathematics School

Headteacher: Gloria Lowe, MA, NPQH  
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Website: [www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk](http://www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk)  
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Dear Families,

7<sup>th</sup> November 2016

I hope that the start to this academic year has been a positive one for you and your child. This letter contains important information and I hope that you will make the time to read it fully. Our drive this year is to make sure that all lessons are taught well across the school and that no student has any reason not to succeed. We want to make sure that our students are noticed and praised for working hard, persevering and challenging themselves to do even better.

## Attendance

It is important that your child attends school and lessons on time and every day. Broken weeks add up to several days and these can then turn into weeks of missed education. This can be the first stages of your daughter/son falling behind in lessons, lacking motivation and in the long term underachieving academically. Attending school every day is also important for social and emotional well-being, as well as for ensuring a sense of achievement and inclusion within the school community. Absences during term time are rigorously monitored. Term time holidays and 'odd' days off will not be authorised. Those students whose attendance becomes a cause for concern due to unauthorised absences will be contacted by the Attendance Team in the first instance, then referred to the Senior Leadership Team or the Local Authority if needed. The Local Authority will most likely impose a fine of up to £120. If your daughter/son is unavoidably absent, you must report this to the school on 020 8699 6731 by 8.30 am.

## Punctuality

The school day starts at 8.40 am. If your daughter/son arrives after 8.50 am they will be marked late to school. Poor punctuality can be improved with good organisation and preparing to be on time. This message is reiterated at the gate, during tutor time and in assemblies. There has been a noticeable improvement this term in punctuality with regular telephone calls home from the Attendance Team. This now needs to be built on and as such the school is going to introduce detentions in order to address the persistent poor punctuality of a minority of students. This means that at Key Stage 3 there will be a Late Detention for 30 minutes every Friday. Students in Key Stage 4 will be given a 30 minute same day detention if they are late to school. This will begin from Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November. If your child is late, you will be sent a message on the morning of the detention. Should your child continue to be late to school, further sanctions will follow and you will be asked to come into school to discuss and agree how to remedy the situation. We trust that you will speak with your child about the importance of getting to school on time every day as well as support the school in the actions it is taking. The vast majority of students are already exhibiting excellent habits regarding being on time to school every day.

## Health and Wellbeing

We are making health, nutrition and exercise a school focus this year. Our first action has been to become a "Sugar Smart" School. We have made a commitment to reducing how much sugar our students, and staff, consume at school and we will be working with Chartwells again to look at how they can support this with the food they offer, alongside the work we will be doing in the curriculum. You may want to have a look at how you can join in at home via the link below:



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<https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/socialcare/health/diet-and-exercise/sugarsmart/Pages/Sugar-Smart-for-families.aspx>

Please encourage your daughter/son to eat a good balanced diet, avoid 'junk' food or refined sugar, as well as exercise regularly. The exercise might include walking to school rather than taking public transport if you live close enough to the school.

### Changes to National Grading Systems

As you may be aware, there has been a significant change to GCSE (and other) qualifications during the past few years and it is important that you are aware of how these changes will affect your child. The table below shows the latest information about the GCSE grades that students will be judged against.

Year Group	GCSE Outcomes	Post-16
Current Y11 (ending Aug 2017)	Mostly A*-G grades 9-1 grades in English and Maths	All subjects have new A-Levels, with all content tested at the end of Year 13.
Current Y10 (ending Aug 2018)	Mostly 9-1 grades Some subjects, e.g. DT/ Business/ Media, still using A*-G.	
Current Y9 (ending Aug 2019)	9-1 grades in all subjects	
Current Y8 (ending Aug 2020)		
Current Y7 (ending Aug 2021)		

All of the new 9-1 GCSEs have been re-developed nationally to be more demanding and students need to get a Grade 5 to achieve what the Government now calls a "Good Pass". All exams for new GCSEs will also take place at the end of Year 11 and the only re-sits allowed are at Post-16, if students had not previously achieved a "Good Pass". In all cases, it is worth also noting that students will be required to re-sit English and/or Maths at Post-16 if they do not achieve a Grade 5 or higher during Key Stage 4.

### The Gold Standard 2016-17

The Gold Standard remains the main way in which the school rewards your daughter for "Aiming High and Achieving Higher" in all aspects of school life. Now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, we have made some significant changes to how the Gold Standard will work this year. These changes were announced to students in assemblies before the October half term.

The main change has been to remove the "Progress Standard". Teachers will still report on student progress, and you will still receive regular reports from the school (4 times per year), but we have broken the link with the Gold Standard, as we believe that students should always be aiming to achieve higher. In the past, students were given target grades for each data collection track, which they were expected to be exceeding in order to achieve "Gold". This led some students to feel satisfied that they had "done enough" in that subject, when in fact we want them to be always looking to improve in all areas.





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We have also made changes to the Punctuality and Achievement Points standards, by raising the bar on what is required to achieve Gold in these categories. You can view a copy of the information that was given to students in assemblies last term on our website:

<http://www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk/Mainfolder/Gold-Standard-assembly-2016-v1.pptx>

## Key Stage 3 Assessment

At Key Stage 3, the Government has scrapped the use of National Curriculum Levels (e.g. 5b). Schools have since been encouraged to develop their own systems for assessing students at Key Stage 3, with the focus firmly on what students know and can do. At Sydenham School, we will be reporting on each student's depth of learning across a range of key indicators for each subject. This will allow students and families to see where there are gaps in any knowledge, understanding and skills that require attention and will provide a much finer level of detail than the old grading system.

We recently discussed sample reports at the Parents' Forum. We received positive feedback, as well as some suggestions for improvement on these reports, and look forward to sharing the new format for Year 7 and 8 when Track One reports are published on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

Once again, thank you for all of your support and for working in active partnership with the school in order to ensure that your child can be the success that they deserve to be.

Yours sincerely

Gloria Lowe  
Headteacher