

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



18th December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write this letter at the start of the final week of the autumn term at the Academy. It continues to be a busy time with the catering team preparing for a traditional Christmas dinner in the primary phase today and the secondary phase tomorrow. It was great last week to see so many of our primary families attending our KS1 nativity performances and the KS2 carol concert. Both pupils and staff worked incredibly hard to ensure these were memorable events with so many talented singers and dancers letting their light shine. Our secondary Christmas Showcase takes place at 6pm on Tuesday 19th December – I hope to see many of you there.

Over the last couple of weeks, our pupils and staff have been involved in a range of fundraising activities. We have been leaving presents at the Giving Tree and these will be distributed by the Salvation Army to local children. In addition, we have been raising money for the Unicef Children in Gaza appeal – staff have donated to an in-house raffle and pupils have been involved in sports competitions. We are proud to be sending a donation to UNICEF of over £1500 this week – it will make a difference.

We have had much to celebrate this term and as parents and carers already know we are especially proud of the fantastic achievements of our Year 11 2023 cohort – their GCSE results place the Academy in the top three schools in Lewisham for progress, and the progress score of +0.36 puts SMA in the top 21% of schools nationally. However, we know that our pupils strive to do even better than this and we are very proud of our current year 11 pupils who have been taking their studies very seriously this term. Last week we had some great news about the achievements of the most recent year 6 cohort in their SATS exams. The primary performance tables were published and they confirm how well our pupils did in the summer tests. The progress maths score was above average at +3.0 and the reading and writing progress scores were both positive indicating pupils at SMA made more than expected progress compared to nationally. Full details of our pupil achievements can be found on the school website and in the government performance tables ([here](#)).

Parent's evenings have taken place for all primary pupils and year 7 and 8 pupils with year 11, 10 and 9 taking place next term. As usual, these evenings have been extremely well attended and many parents and carers have taken the time to complete a short questionnaire. I will share summary data from these surveys once parents and carers from all year groups have had the opportunity to complete them.

Equipment

If you are in need of an idea for a Christmas present for your child, you might want to make sure they still have a pencil case with all of the pens, pencils and other equipment they need along with a Casio calculator! To satisfy examination requirements all pupils are encouraged to have a clear pencil case, as this is the only type they can take into the hall for examinations and assessments. We will be focusing on equipment across the academy next term and all pupils will be expected to be fully equipped at all times.

Punctuality

Unfortunately, punctuality for a small number of our pupils across all phases continues to be a concern. Can I urge parents and carers to ensure their children are taking the best route to school and leaving in plenty of time. Too many pupils are waiting for buses in Lewisham or Blackheath when it would be much faster to simply walk to school from these transport hubs. Secondary pupils should be on site by 8.30am ready for 8.35am line up and form time, which will ensure all of our pupils have a positive start to their day. Primary pupils are expected to be lined up by 8.35am ready to be escorted to class by their teacher.

Leaving site

We also urge parents to ensure pupils go straight home at the end of the academy day especially now the evenings are cold and dark. Pupils should use a direct route, not gather in residential areas and pupils are not allowed to be in Lewisham town centre after 4pm.

The vast majority of pupils follow expectations and behave in a responsible and sensible manner to and from the Academy. When staff are out on patrol this is overwhelmingly what they see – pupils that make them feel very proud.

Key events for the Spring Term

Key Events	Date
Inset day – school closed for pupils	Monday 8 th January
Pupils return	Tuesday 9 th January
Black Caribbean Parents Forum	Tuesday 16 th January
Secondary Early Closure (1.50pm)	Tuesday 23 rd January
Year 9 Vaccinations	Thursday 25 th January
Year 11 Parents Evening	Thursday 25 th January
Year 10 Work Experience	Monday 5 th to Friday 9 th February
Year 9 Paris Trip	Thursday 8 th to Sunday 11 th February
Half term: Monday 12th to Friday 18th February	
Year 9 Parents Evening	Thursday 22 nd February
Year 10 Parents Evening	Thursday 7 th March
Year 8 Vaccinations	Wednesday 27 th March
End of term: Friday 29th March	

Staffing

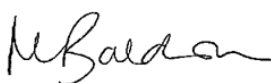
We are saying goodbye to two long-standing members of staff at the end of this term who both started their teaching careers at SMA. Ms Cefai, Senior Teacher joined SMA in 2011 as a PE teacher. I am delighted she has gained a promotion as an Assistant Headteacher much closer to home. She has been a committed member of our pastoral team for many years seeing pupils through to Year 11 and more recently setting up our Lighthouse provision. I know she is going to be really missed by so many SMA pupils. Ms Agorioge has been a maths teacher at SMA since 2013, and more recently, she has been a Director of Learning. She wants to be able to spend more time with her young family so has accepted a similar post at a school 10 minutes from her home in Kent. Pupils and staff alike will miss her.

I am pleased to share news of three additional staff that have been recruited to start in January. Ms Reddish will be joining the PE team and Mr Kempe-Kemo the Maths team. Ms Trace will be joining us as Head of Geography – many thanks go to Ms Wright who covered the position for us this term. Parents will know that we have had a vacancy in Modern Foreign Languages and with some rejigging, we have managed to cover this internally and I am delighted that Ms Smith, our Reading Tutor will be starting her journey to qualified teacher status by training as a Food Technology teacher. This now means we are fully staffed with expert teachers across all phases of the academy.

As we approach the end of term and the end of 2023 I am sure parents, carers and pupils will share with me in thanking all the staff for their continuing hard work and commitment, enabling St Matthew Academy pupils to *let their light shine*. **We return to the academy for learning on Tuesday 9th January 2024.** We expect to see all pupils on time, wearing their full uniform smartly and correctly equipped for learning.

Very best wishes for the Christmas season and a peaceful 2024. Thank you all again for your continued support, it is always much appreciated by everyone.

Yours faithfully



Ms M Baldwin
Headteacher