

# St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX  
Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin  
Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



18<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

I write this letter during the last week of the autumn term at the Academy. It has been a festive and joyful couple of weeks with a range of charity events taking place. Primary pupils and staff donned their Christmas jumpers last Friday to raise money for Save the Children Charity and once again our staff Giving Tree has had many generous donations that will be distributed to local families by the Salvation Army. In what has become an annual SMA tradition, over the last couple of weeks every secondary tutor group and primary class have been bringing in donations for Christmas gift bags – these will be shared in the local community. Yesterday we hosted our first ever community tea party and we expect this to become another annual tradition at SMA. Pupils from across the secondary phase enjoyed entertaining our guests and serving them Christmas treats and all of our guests left with a very special gift bag of treats.

It has been joyful to watch our primary pupils *'let their light shine'* while performing in the Early Years and KS1 nativity and the KS2 Christmas Carol Service. I am so pleased that many of our parents, friends and families were able to join us for these memorable events. Tomorrow is the secondary Christmas Showcase – pupils have been rehearsing hard and I look forward to being amazed by the breadth of talent that will be on show. Today the catering team prepared a traditional Christmas dinner and pupils across the academy enjoyed pulling their crackers, wearing the party hat and singing along to a range of festive songs. Term ends on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec and we will be dismissing pupils from 12pm. We have agreed to the pupils request for a non-uniform day so that we can raise a substantial amount of money to donate to Southwark Crisis Fund and CAFOD. All pupils will be expected to donate a minimum of £2 (secondary) and £1 (primary). If pupils do not meet these expectations then it is unlikely we will have another non-uniform day at the academy. Could I also ask parents to ensure pupils come in clothes that are suitable for a day in school and will also keep them warm enough on their journey to and from the academy.

We have had much to celebrate this term and as parents and carers already know we were incredibly proud of our Ofsted report published earlier this term and we were over the moon to be top of the Lewisham secondary league table for progress for the second year in a row. Last week the primary league tables were published and the really great news about SMA pupil progress continues. We already knew that our performance for writing and maths was in the top 20% of all schools but the Lewisham performance tables show that we were the top performing school for progress in writing and in the top 10 for maths. This is a phenomenal achievement and testament to the hard work of the year 6 team who worked closely with parents to ensure all pupils were able to show how much they knew and could remember. Full details of our pupil's achievements can be found on the school website and in the government performance tables [here](#).

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of a number of changes we are making to our Academy Behaviour Policy in the secondary phase. Full details of these will be shared in letters sent home to each year group by Directors of Learning. Firstly we will be extending the length of our daily centralised detention from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Although lessons are rarely disrupted at SMA when this does happen pupils have told us they find it frustrating and they want it to stop. We have therefore made a decision to introduce a longer sanction that takes place on the day of the incident as research in other schools has shown that when they introduced longer detentions the number of pupils being sanctioned dropped dramatically.

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Successful, confident learners High expectations, outstanding achievements Inclusive, caring, Catholic community Nurturing talent, cultivating ambition Excellence for all.

In a similar vein we are changing the Saturday detention sanction so that behaviour points accumulated in the week preceding the Saturday are counted. This means that letters for Saturday detention will be emailed on the Friday (day before) and followed up with a text.

We will not be sending detention letters home so I encourage all parents and carers to ensure they keep us updated with any changes to mobile phone numbers and email addresses and also suggest secondary parents sign up for the SIMS parent app which gives daily updates on attendance, punctuality, behaviour and achievement points. These changes are unlikely to affect the vast majority of the academy population but we expect them to act as a much stronger deterrent to those pupils that are failing to meet basic academy expectations

We are also responding to pupil feedback regarding late detentions and the suggestion made that the punishment is very harsh for pupils only a couple of minutes late. We are all aware that traffic in Lewisham has been particularly problematic this term so if we are informed of an incident that affects our pupils we do not issue late detentions. However it is crucial that pupils get themselves into good habits so it is important that we continue to sanction lateness. We are introducing a two tier system that we hope will be much fairer for all and also encourage pupils to ensure they are on time for school. If pupils arrive between 8.37 and 8.50am they will be signed in by a member of staff and will serve a 20 minute detention with their form tutor at the end of the day. For the very few pupils arriving after 8.50am they will have to sign in at reception using the electronic registering system and will serve a 90 minute detention at the end of the day.

Finally we are introducing a new reward incentive for pupils to recognise exemplary behaviour and conduct in corridors and around the school site during unstructured times. Any member of staff will be able to issue a 'caught being good' golden ticket to pupils. These golden tickets should be placed in the boxes located in reception and the library and when a golden ticket draw takes place pupils have a chance of winning cinema tickets or restaurant vouchers. We look forward to our pupils rising to the challenge of 'caught being great'.

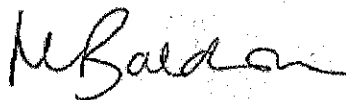
#### Key Dates for the Spring Term

Date	Event	Time
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> January	First day of spring term	8.37am
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> January	Primary Curriculum and Expectation meetings	3.30pm – 4.00pm
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	Secondary phase only – early close for pupils	1.50pm
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Year 11 Parents Evening	4.00 – 6.30pm
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Primary Reading Workshop	3.30pm – 4.00pm
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February	Yr 10 ranking week begins	All week
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> February	Yr 9 Parents evening	4.00 – 6.30pm
Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> January	Primary Math Workshop	3.30pm
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> February	Yr 10 work experience week begins	All week
<b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February - Half term</b>		
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 10 Parents evening	4.00 – 6.30pm
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	World Book Day	All day
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Yr 11 Mini Mocks week begins	All week
Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> March	Yr 2 SAT's Parents meeting	3.30 – 5.30pm
Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> March	Primary parents evening	3.45 - 6.45pm
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March	Primary Parents evening	3.45 - 6.45pm
Thursday 23 April	Year 11 GCSE Drama Performance	TBC
Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 8 Options evening	4.00 – 6.30pm
Wednesday 1 April	Yr 11 mini-mocks Parent Review meeting	All week
Friday 3rd April	Last day of term	All pupils leave at 12pm

As is often the case at the end of a school term we are saying goodbye to a couple of teaching staff. Ms Curran, year 3/4 class teacher will be taken up a post in another Lewisham school and Mrs Kumar, Science Teacher has gained a promotion to a school closer to home. We wish both of these members of staff good luck for the future and thank them for everything they have done at SMA. We are also have to say farewell to Mr October, Deputy Headteacher. He has worked incredibly hard over the last 9 and a half years ensuring that the academy is a calm and purposeful learning environment and as our Designated Safeguarding led has led the team through several successful safeguarding audits and Ofsted inspections. He will be greatly missed by colleagues and pupils alike and we wish him well as he embarks on a new role overseas. I am pleased to announce that Mr Alistair Young will be taking over his role. He joins us from St Thomas the Apostle College, an outstanding local school that we work very closely with and therefore we expect the transition to be a smooth and rapid one for Mr Young.

As we approach the end of term and the end of 2019 I am sure parents, carers and pupils will want to join me in thanking the outstanding staff team at SMA. Their professionalism, continued hard work and commitment to the pupils they teach is second to none and enables SMA pupils to 'let their light shine' in all sorts of exciting ways. We return to **the Academy for learning at 8.37am on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020**. We expect to see all pupils on time, wearing their full uniform smartly and correctly equipped for learning.

Wishing you a merry Christmas and peace throughout the year.



**Miranda Baldwin,  
Headteacher**

