



11 July 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are reaching the end of another busy and successful year at Durham Johnston. This is reflected at this time of year in various ways. In the final four weeks of term the following have taken place or are scheduled to do so: public speaking and music competitions; the sports presentation and KS3 celebration evenings; Visits to New College and Durham University; induction days for Year 6 and 12; a performance of Joseph and the Year 11 Prom; The A Level Art Exhibition and enterprise and career days; visits to the school by Durham Foodbank and other local charities that we have supported; the annual Colours Run to awareness of cancer and its impact upon families. 6th form students have been to Oxford and Cambridge. There are visits scheduled for the battlefields of France and Belgium: Naples, Malaga and Austria. Good schools are measured in a number of ways, but in terms of extracurricular opportunities this has been a very successful year. We offer a wide range of cultural opportunities and this will continue during the next school year. Our teachers give their time in a variety of ways outside the classroom and it is wonderful when that commitment is acknowledged. School life is about much more than what goes on in the classroom and we do a lot to help our students to develop.

We have a very experienced teaching staff at Durham Johnston and our teachers tend to dedicate their careers to the school. A number of teachers are retiring this year after serving the school with distinction. This year we say goodbye to Mrs Jenkins in English who is retiring, to Mrs Wiggers who has made an excellent contribution in Music and to Mr Smith in Maths, who is leaving on a secondment and will return in 2021. We also say goodbye to Mrs Bartley in English and Miss Stretton in Design & Technology. Mr Howarth, a very experienced Physics teacher at Durham Johnston left us in March and we wish him a happy retirement too.

We have a number of new teachers starting in September and experienced colleagues taking on additional responsibility.

- **Mrs Lennon** will continue as Assistant Headteacher.
- **Mr Digby** has been appointed Year Leader for our Year 8 students, with Mrs Hardwick reverting back to full time work within the Geography department.
- **Mr O'Connor** is joining the Business & Computing Department.
- **Ms Cummings** is joining the DT department.
- **Mrs Johnson and Miss Gustard-Bennett** are joining the English Department.
- **Miss Milburn** is joining the Geography Department.
- **Mrs Galvas and Mrs Emsley** are joining the Maths Department.
- **Dr Tournier** is returning to the MFL Department.
- **Mrs Anderson** is returning to the Music Department from secondment.
- **Mr Horn** is joining the Science department as 2nd in Department.

Whilst our teaching staff changes, Durham Johnston's ethos remains grounded in the school's history. As part of my preparation for our recent Year 6 induction evenings, I used the following quote from the school's third Headmaster, Mr Storey:

'What the future holds no one can exactly say... (but the students at Durham Johnston)....will continue to find here both knowledge and experience and skill of mind and hand and muscle; they will take to heart the school's motto and courageously seek for wisdom, and the world will



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be a better place because of their presence in it and their abiding faith in the high standards of work and conduct which the school has ever striven to uphold.'

Mr Storey, Durham Johnston's third Headteacher 1934-51, speaking at the annual prize giving ceremony in 1947

Whilst written 72 years ago, it resonates with what we are currently trying to achieve at the school. We want the students to be academically successful, but to also be aware that there are other aspects of a rounded education that aren't measured in performance tables. We have recently completed our new school plan and Mr Storey's 1947 speech is at the heart of what we will try to achieve when our students return from the summer break. We want them to be academically successful, but more importantly we want them to be kind and caring members of society.

All of our students will be stepping up when they return in September. Year 7 will learn to mix with others in a much larger school and will quickly familiarise themselves with our routines and the building. They will develop the skills needed for a much wider range of subjects. Our Year 8 students will no longer be the youngest in the school and will start to develop much more detailed subject knowledge as they go into greater depth; their knowledge and understanding will become more secure. Year 9 will make important decisions, choosing their GCSE options and considering career pathways. Year 10 will start their GCSEs and will have to make sure that they are organised and that they quickly grasp the demands of study at a new, more detailed level. Year 11 will be given detailed advice about A level study, vocational courses, employment, apprenticeships and revision techniques. Year 12 will go through the induction process and will begin their linear studies; year 13 will make their applications for either university study or employment and will prepare for their final exams. We work hard to develop students over 5 or 7 years and continue to think about the best ways in which students can make the transition from year to year. Maintaining our high standards and making appropriate changes to support the students at Durham Johnston are equally important. As ever, we will continue to encourage students to have a positive attitude towards their subjects, to be organised and to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities provided by the school.

Whilst it has been a very successful year, there are still a number of difficult issues that I would like to reference. In July 2018 we chose to restrict the use of mobile phones by students across the school site. This has clearly been very successful, with students responding positively and taking advantage of 'mobile free' time to socialise and to have space away from constant updates and notifications. However, we are still dealing with a number of issues in school that take place at home, or away from the school site that relate to inconsiderate communication. Please encourage your son/daughter to think carefully before making negative or thoughtless comments about other students via social media. Parents have responsibility for regulating social media use and for ensuring that there are consequences for offensive and unkind behaviour. As parents, I would also encourage you to avoid negative, inaccurate or provocative comments on social media about other members of the school community. We will continue to offer guidance to students about how to de-escalate situations and to avoid confrontation with others. It is important that parents support us in this and set a good example. We are always happy to communicate with parents and carers if there is an issue, but it is important to note that the majority of school staff are very busy between 8.20 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. They teach, meet

with and safeguard students, attend meetings and plan. We will always reply but can rarely do so immediately. Please can I also encourage you to talk at home about the importance of behaving in a considerate and socially responsible manner on their way to and from school. Finally, Councillor Marion Wilson has asked parents and carers from Bearpark, Esh Winning, New Brancepeth and Ushaw Moor to contact her (Marion.Wilson@durham.gov.uk) if they would

like to discuss the possibility of an independent bus service for students between those areas and the school.

For those of you who will be buying new items of uniform, the uniform requirements are set out in the uniform leaflet included with this letter. Some of our girls, however, need reminding too often about the requirements for skirts and tights. We have a selection of skirts which girls will need to change into if the garments they are wearing are unacceptable. To avoid unnecessary and distracting confrontation, please ensure that skirts are of the recommended length and are not made from stretch lycra or knitted type fabrics. Black opaque tights must be worn with shorter style skirts. It is recommended that pupils carry a spare pair of tights in their bag to change into if they become laddered. In addition to the above uniform advice, can I request that if your son or daughter is intending to get their ears pierced in the summer that they do so at the very beginning of term so that the hole is healed and can be removed for the start of term.

It has been an excellent year and I would like to thank you for your continued support. I hope that you have a good summer.

Yours sincerely,

A J. O'Sullivan

Andrew O'Sullivan
Headteacher