

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family have had a lovely summer holiday. I'm writing to you today at the end of a brilliant first week back to provide you with a short update about what is happening at St Antony's in this upcoming academic year.

### **Record results**

At the end of August, we said a final goodbye to our departing Y11 pupils after they collected their GCSE grades. The GCSE results achieved by pupils in 2024 exceeded the outcomes from the previous year, with particularly strong gains in subjects such as English and History. I am particularly pleased to let you know that the provisional progress score the school achieved (known as our 'Progress 8' score) is likely to be the very best in our school's history – a wonderful achievement and a reflection of all the hard work pupils and staff put in. At our recent training day, I thanked the staff on behalf of pupils and families for this achievement, but cautioned that we still have much to do to push our pupils and raise our expectations further of what they can achieve in terms of their academic outcomes. This remains a key priority for us all during this coming year with all our pupils, especially those in Year 11.

### **Respect**

In order to ensure learning continues to remain at the very heart of our school, we will continue to take a strong stance against any form of defiance towards adults from pupils and any form of disruption by pupils in lessons. A calm, focused, respectful climate is what we strive to provide pupils every day so they can focus on what really matters – their learning in lessons – and I'm really pleased with the excellent start pupils have made this week in this regard.

Along with lots of love, patience and support where it is required, this may also mean that pupils will be given sanctions should their behaviour not be up to the very high standards we expect – and this may include detentions, suspensions or even permanent exclusions. We would appreciate your support in reiterating to your child the importance of following adult instructions at all times and being focused in lessons at all times so children get a clear and consistent message both at home and at school.

### **New staff**

We have several new colleagues starting with us this year and I know your child will provide them with a very warm welcome as they get up to speed on how we do things at St Antony's. Our new starters include:

- Mrs Eaton – Second in Science
- Miss Horsfield – Teacher of Science
- Mr Maris – Teacher of Maths
- Miss Dawson – Teacher of RE
- Mrs Parker – SENCO (working days are Tues, Weds, Thurs)
- Mrs Jackson – Teacher of English
- Mrs Lomas – Teacher of Technology

### **Attendance**

Just like last year, a top priority for our pastoral team in this upcoming year is to ensure we maximise the attendance of pupils to school. The GCSE results from the summer again reinforced a key fact – that the more pupils attend school, the better their educational outcomes. The data in the table below provides more detail on how attendance to school impacted on the GCSE grades of pupils in Year 11 last academic year.



Attendance Parameters of Y11 Pupils in 2023-24	Average Attendance	Average GCSE Grade
96.5% or higher (1-week absence or less)	98.5%	4.78
93% - 96.5% (between 1 and 2-weeks absence)	94.5%	4.12
90% - 93% (between 2 and 3-weeks absence)	91.9%	3.94
80% - 90% (between 5 and 3-weeks absence)	87%	3.46
Below 80%	57%	1.89

In our school, the minimum attendance target for each pupil is 97%. As has become customary, we will not authorise any term time holidays. In addition, wherever possible, we ask that medical appointments are made outside of the school day. We will be closely monitoring the attendance of all children and will aim to quickly identify patterns of absence so that support may be offered to young people and their families should this be necessary.

### Behaviour and values curriculum

Following the success of our new behaviour and values curriculum last year, we will again invest time during form period one day each week to provide clarity for pupils of what our high expectations are and why they are so important. This rolling programme will continue to teach all young people how to behave in various different situations in school and live out each of our 5 core values of love, respect, integrity, service and resilience. This support means more of our pupils can align with “*The STA Way*”, so that they avoid getting in to trouble and are becoming the best versions of themselves. Some of the themes within our behaviour and values curriculum in the early part of this year include how to conduct yourself in an assembly, what to do during a fire drill, how to queue respectfully during lunch and what you should do at the start of each lesson.

### Reading and literacy support

We will continue to prioritise reading and literacy support for all pupils in the coming year. Form time reading will take place three times a week (except for pupils in Year 11), with each year group reading the same novel. The novels being read by pupils from the first half term of this academic year are as follows:

Year 7	<b><i>The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe</i></b> , by C.S. Lewis
Year 8	<b><i>My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece</i></b> , by Annabel Pitcher
Year 9	<b><i>The Boy Who Steals Houses</i></b> , by C.G. Drews
Year 10	<b><i>Ketchup Clouds</i></b> , by Annabel Pitcher
Year 11	<b><i>Lord of the Flies</i></b> , by William Golding

For pupils who need more support with their reading, we will continue to provide bespoke phonics support via the Fresh Start programme. This had an incredibly positive impact for many of our weakest readers in the last year academic year (indeed, one of the Ofsted inspectors described the impact for one pupil in particular as “*profound*”) and we look forward to supporting even more pupils again so that they develop their reading and can, in turn, access more readily our taught curriculum in all their lessons.

### Homework

Owing to the significant improvement in pupil engagement with homework last year, our approach to homework this year will be very similar. This will, again, involve all pupils being given booklets that contain recall questions relating to essential knowledge from their various subjects. In addition, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, there are also extra application questions to support pupils with developing their exam technique. This new approach to homework is ultimately designed to help pupils to know more and remember more of what their teachers have taught them, meaning they are more prepared for end of topic assessments and national examinations. Homework will be set on SatchelOne in the usual way and non-completion of homework will continue to be sanctioned unless a pupil has a legitimate reason.

### **Continuing to prioritise and invest heavily in staff development**

I am very clear that all of our recent improvements at St Antony's up to this point would not have been possible if we did not provide high quality support and training all colleagues who work with our children – and therefore this shall remain a key priority for school leaders at St Antony's in the year ahead.

A key part of the training programme for teaching staff will, again, involve developing their knowledge and skills, so they set challenging tasks for pupils to complete (meaning all our pupils feel really stretched) and they use the right methods in lessons to gain a clear understanding of what pupils do and do not yet know, meaning lessons can then be adapted in real time to meet the needs of pupils. This will help teachers to strengthen the connection between what is taught and what is learnt by young people.

### **Open evening**

Our annual open evening will take place on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September (4pm to 7pm) and this will mean we will need to close the school early on this date in order to ensure our site is ready. Hence, pupils will be leaving at 1pm on that day after they have had lunch and received their afternoon registration mark.

### **Information evenings for parents / carers**

Part of our commitment to engage more fully with parents and carers means we are, again, holding year group information evenings for pupils in Y8, Y9, Y10 and Y11 so you have clarity about the year ahead for child. It will be an opportunity to come in to school, hear from various school leaders and ask questions. Refreshments will be provided. Dates of the various information evenings are outlined below. For parents and carers of pupils in Y7, lots of information was provided at the transition event last summer, but we will be inviting you into school to meet your child's form tutor towards the end of this half term so you can see how your child has settled into life at St Antony's.

Year	Date
7 (settling in evening)	Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup> Oct (4pm – 6pm)
8	Wed 25 <sup>th</sup> Sept (5pm – 6pm)
9	Tues 24 <sup>th</sup> Sept (5pm – 6pm)
10	Wed 11 <sup>th</sup> Sept (5pm – 6pm)
11	Tues 10 <sup>th</sup> Sept (5pm – 6pm)

Finally, you will find attached with this letter a summary of key dates for your diary for this upcoming Autumn Term so you are fully aware of what is going on and can plan accordingly, should that be necessary.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support

Kind regards



Mr A Campbell  
Headteacher