



4 September 2023

START OF THE AUTUMN TERM

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

I hope you had a relaxing and enjoyable summer and are ready for the start of the new academic year. I am sure you will be relieved to know that Belper is not one of the schools that have been forced to close because of crumbling concrete! It is hard to imagine a worst start to the year for everyone in those schools and we hope their problems can be rectified quickly.

We have been very busy over the summer with loads of improvements going on and some record exam results! The pandemic disruption was very difficult for everyone so for our students to do so well is amazing! They studied hard and thoroughly deserve their great qualifications. Most have now finalised their plans for their next steps, and it is great to see so many of year 11 returning to our Sixth Form.

Staff are back in school on Monday 4 September, with students returning on Wednesday 6 September. The morning for the students will be the usual start of the year preparations with lessons beginning in the afternoon. We are looking forward to everyone returning and especially looking forward to meeting our new Year 7s!

Strikes Called Off

I am pleased to announce that the teacher pay negotiations between Unions and the Government were successfully concluded just before the summer break and all teacher strikes have been called off. The support staff unions, however, are still negotiating and I hope that those talks can be finalised soon.

Parent App

Just a quick reminder that we are replacing our Cloud School parent app with a new one soon (called Bromcom), so it has been switched off. The new, much improved app will be launched in the next few weeks, and we will be back in touch to let you know more about it later this half term.

Cashless Catering

We are also introducing cashless catering this half term so that families can pay online for students' food rather than have to find cash each morning. We expect to be able to launch it in a couple of weeks once all families have signed up.

Year 5 & 6 Open Evening

Our annual Year 5 & 6 Open Evening will be on Thursday 28 September starting at 5.30pm. There will be school tours with lots going on and presentations introducing the school at 5:30pm, 6:15pm and 7pm.

Lunch Time Food Costs

Derbyshire County Council have had to raise the prices for the meal deals for school lunches. It will now be £3 for the main dish and a drink OR dessert. It is £3.55 for the main dish with a drink AND a dessert. The allowance for students eligible for free school meals has increased to £3.55 accordingly.

Record Exam Results

The Year 13 students achieved a strong set of exam results and are moving on to some very positive destinations. The average grade was a C+ with 24 students achieving an average A*/A/B. 12 students averaged an A grade, 4 of whom had an average of a A*. We are delighted they did so well and wish them all the best for the next stages of their lives. They are going to achieve some great things!

The results at Year 11 were our **best ever** in many areas. An amazing achievement considering what our students have been through in the last few years with the pandemic disruption.

The average grade was just under a 5 (a B- in "old money") with over 70% achieving a 5 in English or Maths. 25 students achieved an average grade 7 (an old A grade) with 6 of those achieving an average of an 8 or 9 (an A* and A** under the old system)

These are absolutely fantastic results and it's great to see so many of our Year 11 students remaining with us in our Sixth Form. We will miss those that are leaving us, but we are proud of what they have achieved.

Embark Multi Academy Trust

The school is joining the Embark Multi Academy Trust school improvement programme this year. We strongly believe that schools should work together to share best practice and provide mutual developmental support and we are delighted that we are able to work with such a strong group of schools. There are over 25 primary and secondary schools in the Trust, all of whom are Derbyshire based and several are in Amber Valley. The secondary schools which are part of the Trust are Antony Gell School, Buxton Community School, Parkside School and Aldecar School.

We began some initial work with the Trust in the summer term which went really well and so we have chosen to expand it. Should the project succeed, we are intending to apply to fully join the Trust, probably in the summer term. If that happens, we will hold a full public consultation as part of the application process.

Site Work

Ove the summer there has been a lot going on to improve our site. Several rooms have been refurbished, lots of computer kit has been improved and we have put new carpets in several rooms including the sixth form common room.

We have also begun a £3 million project to improve our energy efficiency and replace a lot of our flat roofing. Once complete, this will save money year on year due to significantly reduced electricity bills and reduced maintenance costs. Both projects are expected to finish next summer. It will be a little disruptive at times but will be well worth it in the long run.

With my best wishes



Nick Goforth, Headteacher
