



Burnt Mill Academy

Head Teacher: Helena Mills BA Hons, NPQH

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8th November 2013

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you had an enjoyable half term with your sons and daughters, they certainly deserved a break after working so hard in September and October. This half term, although only seven weeks long, is packed full of very important events that I would like to draw your attention to.

12 th November	Year 8 Parents' Evening 4:00pm – 7:00pm
13 th November	Year 8 HPV Vaccinations
14 th November	Choir Performance at the Playhouse 7:45pm
14 th November	Ballet trip to Harlow Playhouse
21 st November	Choir performing at the Christmas Tree Lighting, Harlow Town Centre
25 th November	Year 8 Army Experience Day
26 th November	PE trip to Loughborough University
28 th November	Year 11 CV Writing Day and Business Lunch
29 th November	Non-pupil day and Houses of Parliament Trip – Year 11 A/A* Maths students
2 nd December	Year 9 Parents' Evening 4:00pm – 7:00pm
4 th December	Presentation Evening for Class of 2013
6 th December	Christmas Market Trip to Lille and Arras
18 th December	Christmas Bazaar 6:00pm – 8:00pm
19 th December	Performance of "The Snow Queen", 7:30pm, Years 7 - 10
20 th December	Non-uniform day/break up for Christmas Holiday at 12:10pm
6 th January 2014	Non-pupil day
7 th January 2014	Start of term

I would also like draw your attention to recent changes that the Secretary of State for Education has made to GCSEs since the start of this academic year. Firstly, parents may be aware that in the past students used to be awarded 20% of their final GCSE English Language qualification, for speaking and listening assessments, which our students used to be very successful in. This component has been removed for the current Year 11 and all future cohorts of students. Also a decision has been made to introduce discounting codes to try and discourage students from studying subjects that in the view of the Secretary of State for Education count as 'softer subjects' like Drama for example. Finally, schools are being heavily discouraged, in fact may well be penalised in league tables, for allowing students to sit their GCSE Maths and English early. None of these changes will ever deter us here at Burnt Mill from ensuring students have as many chances as they need to achieve these key qualifications. We will also continue to provide students with the opportunity to study a wide range of very traditional subjects but also subjects that will enable them to compete on the world stage in the twenty first century. However, I thought it is important that parents know that these last minute changes are constantly being thrown at the school, which is very frustrating because as you know we plan very carefully, often years in advance, to ensure our students achieve the best results possible so they can get into the top universities. It is also worth noting that the Government's desire to give students a narrow diet of very traditional subjects is something that we can overcome through the new curriculum which we will be offering to Year 7, 8 and 9 from September 2014.

As always our students have surpassed themselves in dealing with all these changes, especially the current Year 11s who are the most affected by them. They remain undeterred and are working harder and harder to ensure that any new hurdle that is thrown in their way will not prevent them achieving those very high grades in the summer. I commend them for their resilience and hope that the January results will reflect the effort they have put in and the high level of skill they have acquired in English and Maths through excellent teaching. I also know they will continue to remain highly motivated and work hard for the remainder of this year.

I would also like to commend all our students for the amount of additional effort they put into their learning at home. Between 8 and 10 hours per week homework is now the norm in our school and students are thriving on the extra challenges they are being given. If your son or daughter still appears to be getting too little homework then please contact Mr Blaney who is in charge of homework across the school.

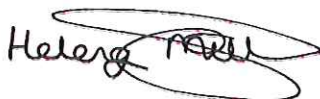
I always talk about how we work hard and play hard at Burnt Mill. This is shown every single day in lessons where students learn so much. Visitors to the school, of which there have been hundreds in the last half term, say they have never seen a school work ethic like it. But after school is also a joy to see too. So many students involved in exciting clubs - Equestrian club, the Great Bake off and The Band are just a few of the engaging and exciting activities the staff have put on for your sons and daughters. If you feel your son or daughter is not really getting involved in clubs or trips the person to contact is Miss Wilson, our Enrichment Co-ordinator on wilsonk@burntmill.essex.sch.uk

Finally, just a reminder that we do expect students to have perfect uniform, even on their way to and from school. I have really had to clamp down on the girls' skirt length in recent weeks and just wish to offer a polite reminder to all parents with daughters that the skirt should sit just slightly above the knee. Also, could I remind all parents that shoes should be black, that canvas shoes, trainers and boots (except Kicker boots) are not permitted and that for the girls, shoes should be plain without any bow or other ornament and should not be backless. When we do get to the end of this term, school will finish at 12:10pm and students will be rewarded for their perfect uniform by having the thing they most desire - a non-uniform day, the proceeds of which will go to supporting the homeless in Harlow over Christmas.

I look forward to seeing you at the many events we are holding over the next few weeks especially the PTA Christmas Bazaar which is always a good place to purchase a few stocking fillers.

Thank you as always for your support for your exceptional sons and daughters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena Mills', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Helena Mills
Head Teacher