

24th May 2024

Headteacher's update: end of term 5

Dear Families,

I am writing to you with my end-of-term update for term 5. Today, we have bid “adieu” to our Year 11 class of 2024 as they head off on their study leave for GCSE and other exams. I particularly enjoyed my final assembly with this wonderful year group, reliving their eventful time with us at the Academy from their start as fresh-faced Year 7s, through the pandemic and back, and right up to the present day as the fine young people they have become. I know you will all join me in wishing them well in the rest of their exams and beyond into their bright futures.

General election

As you will know, the Prime Minister has announced a general election to take place on 4th July 2024. As public servants, teachers (including Headteachers) must and will remain politically neutral. We will be working with our students over the coming period to help them to engage with the issues at stake in this election, to form their own opinions on political issues, and to critically analyse the messages they will see in the media during the campaign.

Changes to attendance fines: new national framework

Students' attendance at school is fundamental to their educational progress. Whilst attendance at Churchill remains above the national average for secondary schools, we continue to work hard to support all our students to attend every single day of school that is possible. We rely on our partnership with families to achieve this, providing support and challenge where necessary.

If your child misses school without a good reason, the local authority can intervene and parents or carers may be issued a fine. The government is

introducing a new national framework for this from August 2024. The key changes are:

- Fines will increase from £60 to £80 for a first time offence or £160 if paid after 21 days and within 28 days.
- In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.
- Fines per parent will be capped at two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

For further information on these changes, please see the Department for Education blog: [Fines for parents for taking children out of school - what you need to know](#).

Changes to the RE curriculum

Over recent years all students in Year 10 have taken a short course GCSE in Religious Education (RE), unless they had chosen the full course GCSE as one of their options. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, we can no longer sustain this in 2025, so the short course GCSE will be replaced with an internal assessment.

This change will enable us to review the statutory RE course offered to all students across Years 9, 10 and 11, broadening and enhancing this essential part of the curriculum. Students who have chosen full course RE as one of their GCSE options will continue on their chosen course, although the additional philosophy certificate will no longer be available.

If you have any questions about these changes, please email churchill@churchill-academy.org with the subject line "RE changes" so we can respond.

Staffing update

Last week, we said farewell to our receptionist **Zoe Clements**, who has been a wonderful colleague in our administration team. We are delighted to have made some excellent new appointments to our administration team, and we look forward to welcoming new colleagues to the team after half term.

As mentioned earlier, we are in the midst of a national teacher recruitment crisis, and we are hearing stories of unfilled vacancies from colleagues across the region and nationally. In this context, I am especially delighted to say that, as we reach the key deadline of May half term, we have successfully recruited superb and well-qualified teachers into all of our vacancies for September, which puts us in a very strong position for the next academic year. I will publish a full list of leavers and new staff in my term 6 update.

Finally, we say farewell today to **Rob Morgan**, Head of Sixth Form and Careers, who leaves us to take up his new role as Deputy Headteacher at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School in Bristol after half term. Rob joined Churchill Academy & Sixth Form in 2005 and has made an immeasurable contribution over the past 18 years, including as Head of Hanover House, Careers Leader and Head of Sixth Form. We wish Rob every success in his new role and thank him for all he has done for the Academy throughout his time here. Hannah Sheppard will take over full time as Assistant Headteacher for Sixth Form and Careers in term 6.

And finally...

Thank you, as ever, for your continued support of the Academy. We wish you a happy, healthy and restful half term break. We look forward to welcoming our students back to school on **Monday 3rd June** for a summer term packed with exciting events and celebrations!

Yours sincerely,



Chris Hildrew

Headteacher