



Dame Alice Owen's School

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Dear Parents and Carers

It is my pleasure to be able to write to you all at the start of another academic year and to extend a special welcome to all our new Year 7 and Year 12 students to our Owen's family; I hope that you will all have a fantastic time with us.

Whether you are a new or existing student, the only way to get the most out of school life is to get involved with as much as you can manage! For students, getting involved with extra-curricular clubs is a great way to meet others who share your passions and interests. There is a huge range of opportunities on offer so you are bound to find something you like. If not, why not set up your own club? The following link, which is updated periodically, will show you just what we already have on offer: <http://damealiceowens.herts.sch.uk/curriculum/extra-activities/>.

As parents, the best way to meet other parents and get involved with the school is through the OSA (Owen's School Association), through whom the students benefit hugely. The OSA runs key events throughout the year which you can support by attending or helping to organise. The OSA team is a fantastic group of parents and carers (past and present) who we cannot thank enough for their time and continual support. They are always looking for volunteers who could spare even a small amount of time to help out as and when they feel they can, as well as for those who are able to make a bigger commitment. The OSA meets in the Old Library at 8pm on the first Monday of each month (the first meeting will be tonight, Monday 4th September) - you'll be very welcome to simply turn up or to speak to Glenn Taylor or Kate Sheer, Co-chairs of the OSA, via email: chair@theosa.org.uk or through the usual school number: 01707 643 441 to talk about getting involved.

As a school we are also keen to accept parent volunteers to help in certain classes, with school administration, in the library or maybe even elsewhere where you feel you could make a contribution. If you would be able to help in anyway, please contact me through the school office on the number above or via email at admin@damealiceowens.herts.sch.uk.

Academically, our students continue to thrive. Our KS4 and 5 students have achieved outstanding examination results with the number of A*s achieved in both A level and GCSE this year being higher than last.

25% of all A-Level entries were awarded an A* grade

82% of all A-Level entries were graded A*, A or B

20 students have confirmed places at Oxford or Cambridge

96% of students in Year 11 secured 5 A*-C grades including a secure pass in English and Mathematics

22% of the new-style GCSE examinations were awarded the top grade 9

51% of the new-style GCSE examinations were awarded grade 9-7

My congratulations extend to all our students who sat public examinations; outstanding results such as these only come about through their continued hard work. My thanks also go to our supportive parents and dedicated staff who also worked tirelessly to provide the best guidance they could to each student.

I would like to thank parents for their participation in the Kirkland Rowell Survey which took place at the end of last term and to share some of the outcomes with you here:

547 questionnaires were completed, a response rate of 37.5% which is a 14% increase on the number of returns compared to 2014. 88.5% of parents rated the school as outstanding with 93% of parents thinking that the school's performance was as good as or better than last year. 96% of parents would recommend this school to others and 18% of Year 7 parents who responded said the school had exceeded the high expectation they had of it before starting.

You told us that you were happiest with the quality of teaching, the school facilities and careers advice. In relative terms you said you were least happy with student access to ICT and the availability of resources although these areas were still rated as good. When asked about top priorities for improvement, you said you would like greater communication with school as well as for the school to keep developing student confidence and potential.

I would like to thank you for all the positive and constructive comments you gave us about the school in general as well as those pertaining to specific areas of the school and staff. We have already been able to work a number of these into our School Development Plan for 2017-18. As the year progresses, I would like to hold a number of focus groups to hear more about how we can further improve some of the aspects of the school as highlighted above; specific details of these will be published in due course.

At Dame Alice Owen's we seek to encourage our students to be inquisitive about the world around them, we are keen to develop their independence and strong study skills to lead them to continue to question and learn from all that they see around them as they grow up. We are always delighted to be able to offer our students numerous opportunities for historical and political debate, a vast array of visits as well as a wide range of artistic, dramatic, design, sporting and musical events. We hope that these opportunities help the students develop into well rounded individuals who appreciate and engage with a wide mix of the culture they see around them.

This year we have another exciting year ahead of us. We are looking forward to some wonderful visits including to Costa Rica which will be in addition to our more standard educational visits to Europe as well as to sites of interest and relevance around Britain.

It is always useful to remind students and parents that our 'golden ticket' scheme is still in place whereby every student in Years 7 to 10 has a virtual 'golden ticket' which they can use once in their school career to gain a priority place on a visit of their choice. Most of our visits are over-subscribed and we operate a lottery system whereby names are selected at random to participate in the visit. If a student is keen to secure a place on a certain visit they can use their 'golden ticket' to ensure they get a priority place. If there are more 'golden tickets' used than there are places on a specific trip, a lottery system will still be used between those using their

'golden ticket'. In this case, if a student secures a place on the visit, their ticket will be considered spent. If they are unsuccessful in securing a place, they will be able to use their ticket on another occasion. We do understand the disappointment of not securing a place on a visit you would like to go on but for a variety of reasons it is not always possible to take everyone who wishes to participate. To use your 'golden ticket' you must simply make it clear on your application that you wish to use your ticket for that visit.

There is never a dull moment at Owen's! We update our 'News' page of the website regularly with information about what has been going on at school and there is also a wealth of information pertaining to school events and the school calendar on our website too. Please note that the calendar is updated half termly to ensure its accuracy and to facilitate your personal planning.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the vast majority of students who attend school appropriately dressed and to thank their parents who play a key role in guaranteeing they do so. I know that there has been much discussion about skirt length and shoes over time and I would like to reinforce the expectation that a skirt covers the majority of a girl's thigh and that school shoes are sturdy leather/leather effect shoes with a low heel. Converse trainers, Vans and alike are not considered to be a sturdy shoe. I would also like to solicit parental support in the following areas pertaining to uniform:

- Please note that nail varnish of any sort, including gel based nail varnish, gel or false nails, is not allowed at school. I appreciate that the latter are costly to apply and remove and would therefore appreciate your support in ensuring that this is a luxury reserved for school holidays and not term time.
- Earrings are not to be worn at school.
- Students in the Sixth Form should attend school in business attire.

We know that our students do best when there is good, open communication between school and home. To this end, please remember that you can contact your child's form tutor with any concerns or queries about your child's social, emotional or wider academic progress. They should be your first port of call and can be contacted directly by email or through the usual admin@damealiceowens.herts.sch.uk address. If your concerns are subject specific you can contact your child's subject teachers or the relevant Head of Department by email as above.

Looking forward to continued success at Owen's and getting to know more of you over the year to come.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Hannah Nemko
Headteacher