

# Meopham School

A Member of Swale Academies Trust

Headteacher: Mr E Roberts BA Hons. PGCE NPQH



Wrotham Road Meopham Kent DA13 0AH

Tel: 01474 814646

Website: [www.meophamschool.org.uk](http://www.meophamschool.org.uk)

2nd June 2025

Dear parents and carers,

I hope you are well and you all were able to spend some valuable time with friends and family over the half-term break. At Meopham School, we're looking forward to welcoming all of our students back and getting on with all the exciting things we have in store this term.

## Well Done

Congratulations to the following students who received Headteacher Commendations during our Pizza Lunch on the Friday before half-term:

**Jasmine S (Y9) - Philosophy** - Creating an excellent and creative charter of human rights.

**Dolly D (Y9) - Catering** - Representing the school at Swalefeast and winning Best Main Dish!

**Amelia R (Y9) - Catering** - Representing the school at Swalefeast and winning Best Main Dish!

**Jack H (Y9) - Catering** - Representing the school at Swalefeast and winning Best Main Dish!

**Lilly P (Y9) - Geography** - Excellent work recently - focused and on task for all activities.

**Leo L (Y9) - Geography** - Brilliant oracy during the lesson and helpful towards other students.

**James C (Y9) - English** - Diligence in English lessons.

**Fin S (Y9) - English** - Always punctual and excellent effort in lessons.

**Matthew W (Y7) - English** - Consistently excellent effort in lessons.

**Nethra I W A (Y8) - English** - Always punctual and focused in lessons.

**Martha F (Y8) - English** - Always respectful and focused in lessons.

**Louis S (Y10) - English** - Consistently excellent effort in lessons.

**Olivia B (Y10) - English** - Always respectful and focused in lessons.

**Oliver M (Y11) - English** - Always respectful and focused in lessons.

Also, a huge **well done** to **Talia J-E (Y9) and Beth B (Y8)** who participated in the London/Kent schools athletics events. Both girls performed superbly, with Beth placing in 26th for the entire region and Talia placing 1st. An incredible achievement, the result of both sporting excellence and exceptional tenacity! Thanks also to **Mr Goldsmith** who organised the students' participation in this event.

## Cultural Capital

A big thank you once more to **Mr Huggens**, who organised our Year 9 Rewards Trip to Thorpe Park in the week prior to the half-term holidays. We hope students enjoyed the trip in recognition of their excellent effort this year.

Moving forward, we will be outlining a new programme of rewards trips from next year, which will aim to include all students who have met clear and defined criteria in terms of attendance, punctuality and attitude to learning.

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## Y10 Work Experience

A huge well done to all of our Year 10s who undertook the Work Experience placements in the final week of last term. We know this can sometimes be a daunting experience, but we have had lots of positive feedback from employers regarding both the quality of the work produced by our students and the manner in which they conducted themselves. We hope it was a rewarding insight into the world of work and a huge thank you goes to **Ms Bishop** and **Mrs Hatch** for overseeing the many arrangements for this.

## New Appointments

I would like to wish a warm welcome to **Mr Wood**, who begins at the school today in his new role as **Assistant Head Teacher - Behaviour and Welfare** alongside Mrs Davies-Lane and Mr McQuillan.

Within the next few weeks, we also have joining us **Mr Okitougou** - a highly qualified new member of the **Pastoral Support Manager** team. Mr Okitougou brings a wealth of experience of supporting young people in pastoral care, including experience working within the probation service. We look forward to welcoming him soon.

Alongside Mr Wood and Mr Okitougou, we have a number of other exciting appointments to the staff team at school, who will bring a wide array of experience, skill and talent to the school from September:

**Mr Hicks**, who I mentioned in my last letter, has accepted the position of **Head of Maths**. Mr Hicks has many years experience within leadership of Maths in successful schools.

**Ms Sreedharan** will join us as **Deputy Head of Maths**. Ms Sreedharan has over twenty years experience in teaching, both in schools across London but most recently holding a senior position for the last ten years in a successful independent school.

Both Mr Hicks and Ms Sreedharan - as well as members of our current Maths team - are keen to ensure A-Level Maths is offered as a consistent option as part of our Sixth Form provision.

**Mr Smith** - who taught for several years at the school - has decided (after a brief hiatus at another local secondary school) to rejoin Meopham School and continue a very successful career as part of our exciting new Maths team.

**Mrs Hartley** will join our Senior Leadership Team as **Senior Assistant Headteacher - Sixth Form and Raising Standards**. Mrs Hartley has many years of senior leadership experience in another local secondary school and is joining us in a crucial position overseeing the continuing development and improvement both of the school's Sixth Form and building on the school's successful exam results.

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Supporting Mrs Hartley within our Raising Standards Team - as well as becoming a crucial member of our **Maths** department - **Ms Bland** will be joining us as **Raising Standards Lead**, a role which will oversee a number of academic aspects of the school. Ms Bland has worked successfully as a Head of Maths in a number of schools and will bring a lot of experience to our team!

**Mr Van Tonder** will be joining us as a **Teacher of Geography**. He has a number of years experience teaching Geography - including as an A-Level Geography teacher and examiner - as well as a range of experience outside of education in Geography-related roles, which we are sure will be a fantastic opportunity to relate the study of Geography to the wider world. He is an excellent addition to our Humanities team.

**Mr Omodaratan** joins us as a **Teacher of Science**. Mr Omodaratan has many years teaching experience and - with a rare specialism in Physics - is a valuable addition to our Science team.

In PE, we have **Mr Smith** and **Miss Broad** - two excellent **Teachers of PE** who were very impressive during a competitive interview process. They bring a range of sporting specialisms to help broaden the range of sports we offer as a school. Miss Broad will join us in September, whilst Mr Smith will be able to join us a little earlier in July.

In the Social Sciences, we are very pleased to announce that **Ms Johnson** will be joining us as a **Teacher of Social Science**, supporting in a range of subjects across Social Sciences and Humanities, but with a specialism in Sociology, which is a very popular A-Level course. Ms Johnson already knows the school very well, and we look forward to welcoming her in July.

Returning from maternity leave, we will also welcome back **Ms Woods - Head of Humanities, Mrs Clements - Assistant Headteacher - Designated Safeguarding Lead** and **Miss Searle - Teaching Assistant**.

Of course, we are always sad to see some staff depart us, and of course we wish those leaving us in July the very best for the future when the time comes.

However, we are also very excited about the quality and calibre of staff that have decided to join Meopham on our continuing journey. In particular, with the well-reported national shortage of teachers, the school is in a very fortunate position to be fully staffed for September, which unfortunately is not the case for many schools currently.

Nonetheless, I strongly believe that - regardless of national teacher shortages - recruitment of staff should never be about "filling the gaps." I would be happier for a post to remain unfilled temporarily than to recruit someone who is not up to the high standards we are setting out for the future of the school and the quality of its teaching. I am happy to say - due to the hard work of numerous staff who have supported me with the recruitment process - that we have not only ensured all teaching positions are filled, but also that the teachers joining us *are* of

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the highest calibre, and will be fundamental in driving the school to the very high standards that I know you are aware I have set for the school's future. Therefore, we cannot wait for September and to welcome the new members to our team!

## **Meopham Sixth Form - 2025-27 Options**

On a related note, I also wanted to confirm with any prospective Sixth Form students next year that - providing there is sufficient uptake of the course (which applications indicate there will be) all of the following courses will be able to run in the respective "blocks."

Blocking				
A	B	C	D	E
<b>Criminology</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Criminology</b>	<b>Law</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Biology</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>Health &amp; Social</b>	<b>Sport</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>Philosophy &amp; Ethics</b>
			<b>Maths</b>	

In particular, I wanted to draw candidates' attention to A-Level Maths and A-Level Geography. There has been some speculation about whether these courses will be able to run in our Sixth Form for the 2025 cohort. Due to the appointments mentioned above, I can confirm that **both A-Level Maths and A-Level Geography will be able to run next academic year.** Should this change any students' decision regarding their Sixth Form applications, please email Mrs Huggens at [lily.huggens@swale.at](mailto:lily.huggens@swale.at).

## **Parking**

In my last letter - as well as in several others - I politely requested that those parents and carers who were not following the correct procedure for using our allocated drop-off points in our car park please begin to do so. Unfortunately, some have not done this. We still regularly have: 1. cars parking up directly in front of the entrance to our allocated car park - blocking others from using it correctly; 2. cars parked up on Wrotham Road, on the small junction into Wrotham Road and even in the bus stop(!), causing congestion and confusion at the end of the school day and 3. cars stopping on the roundabout to drop off and collect students.

If this does continue, unfortunately we will have little choice but to take further action, as it is a matter of the safety of our students as they leave the school site. I am not happy with the current processes - as I feel they can be improved to provide a more orderly exit (and therefore safety) for students - and aware there is work to do our end, but the first step towards this is ensuring all parents and carers are following our system correctly.

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I will, therefore, ask one more time that we please follow the guidance as outlined.

## **Year 11 - Exams Period**

Well done to all of those Year 11 (and, indeed, some of our Year 13) students who were in over the half-term break for revision sessions! I was in on the first Saturday, and the dedication and focus shown by those students who were at school in their own time to try and improve their grades further was very impressive indeed.

There are still a few Saturday sessions available, and these can be booked here if required:

<https://forms.gle/vBfncK9Ka7LofUMG7>

My thanks to all the staff who have facilitated these sessions for the students.

A reminder to all parents/carers of Year 11 students that - over the next few weeks - there are a number of **adaptations to the timetable** to ensure that students receive **extended revision lessons - during normal school time - with subject teachers from the qualifications they still have exams in**. This is to ensure that we maximise Year 11's contact with the subject specialists who can best prepare them for the demands of the remaining exams.

Some parents/carers have queried about so-called "study leave." Whilst we are aware one or two schools locally have permitted this, it is not normal practice for most schools and has not been so for some years. This practice has been phased out for the following good reasons:

1. We want to **maximise the amount of contact time students have with their teachers**, who are subject experts and trained to deliver the most effective strategies to prepare students for exams. Teachers are also best placed to identify the areas of the course students are less confident in and tailor lessons to meet their needs accordingly. Maximising contact time with teachers is especially crucial given the disruption students had early in the secondary school experience due to the pandemic.
2. In particular, as some papers are completed in specific subjects, **teachers as subject experts can often analyse these papers and identify the likely topics/skills to come up in subsequent papers**, thus giving students a significant advantage.
3. As your child's school timetable is designed to balance the range of subjects they study effectively, by following their normal school curriculum, **students will ensure they revise each of their subjects in the correct balance**, as when students revise independently they have a tendency to focus overly on the short-term i.e. exams coming up in the next few days, leading them to inadvertently dedicate an

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insufficient amount of time on exams later in the exam season, by which point it is too late. **Curriculum Leaders have provided revision packs to students** that they can use independently in any lessons where they have completed their courses already and - as mentioned above - timetable changes will be made over the next few weeks to provide **extended revision lessons** in remaining qualifications, ensuring students get as much time with the relevant teachers as possible.

4. **The majority of schools do not offer study leave** - and haven't done so for a number of years - as there is little tangible evidence that this improves students' outcomes, but in fact can hamper attainment at this late stage due to the strong correlation between high attendance - even until the end of Year 11 - and strong outcomes. **'Pupils who had between 95-100% attendance in Year 11 were 1.9 times more likely to achieve a Grade 5 in English and Maths GCSE compared to pupils who only attended 90-95% of the time.'** (DfE, 2025).
5. The school is following guidance from the Department for Education, which states: **'study leave should not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete.'** (DfE: 2024).

The normal processes for unauthorised absence will continue for Year 11 students throughout the exam season and unfortunately any students who elect not to attend school or leave the school site after exams will not be able to attend the Leavers' Assembly or the school prom.

## **Arrangements for Year 11s at the End of the Exam Season**

Year 11s' last day when they are all required in school will be on **Monday 16th June**. After that date, the very small number of students who still have exams will need to attend for their exam only.

After Year 11s' Physics exam on Monday 16th June, they will have an opportunity to partake in a whole year group photograph, as well as individual and small group photos should they wish. After this, they will be able to leave the school site.

Year 11 students will then be invited back into school for the **Leavers' Assembly on Friday 20th June**, where students will have the opportunity to celebrate their five years at Meopham School, say farewell to staff and peers, win awards and sign each other's shirts and books. More details will follow regarding this event, but approximate times will be 8.40am-10.40am.

## **Moving Forward**

We know as we approach the tail end of the exam season that our Year 11 and 13 students will undoubtedly be looking forward to the end now, but keep going! We are really proud of all of the hard work you have put in so far and we're sure that - on results day - they will know they did their very utmost to secure an excellent and exciting next step in their education. As for

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our other students, we have seven more weeks of important learning ahead of us, and we cannot wait to get started! (I will, myself, be picking up a little Year 7 English teaching this term, and I'm looking forward to getting to know some of our youngest students a little better!)

In the final week of last term, I conducted assemblies with our Year 7, 8 and 9 students on the importance of respect, both within our school community and in the local area.

In particular, I discussed with our KS3 students the importance of ensuring that - whether through the smartness of our uniform, the way we conduct ourselves in the local community or indeed the way we conduct ourselves online - we always act with the greatest of respect to others.

This is important in and of itself - as respect should come first in any interaction and is the cornerstone of a decent society - but I also explained to students that it is important to act in this way in order *to be respected by others*. I am sure we all agree that we want the local community to have *respect* for Meopham students - to consider Meopham students to be impressive young people, with an impressive reputation.

We are well aware that some students may roll their eyes (who didn't, as a teenager?) when we talk about why uniform should be smart on their journey home, or why they should have the highest of manners as they leave school site, or interact with each other online, but it really is important for their own futures. I want our young people to hold their heads high when they tell others that they are a Meopham student; I want employers to see Meopham School on our students' CVs and think - 'this will be a great candidate.'

So yes, we do drone on in assemblies about behaviour and about uniform, but we do it because we want our young people to feel that sense of pride in their school, and to feel they are respected in the local community *because* they are Meopham students.

We all play a part in this.

A reminder that, should you wish to book a meeting with me to discuss the future of the school and our plans for next year, you are more than welcome to do so. You can use the link below: [Headteacher Meeting Request Form](#)

Have a lovely week and I will speak to you all again next Monday!

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E Roberts', written over a thin horizontal line.

Mr Roberts  
Headteacher