

IN TOUCH



HEADTEACHER'S LETTER 1

SEPTEMBER 2011

KINGSDOWN SCHOOL
www.kingsdownschool.co.uk

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to the new academic year, especially to the students who have joined us for the first time in year 7.

We are still celebrating a very successful summer for various reasons:

Firstly:

Well done to all the students and teachers for the hard work put into this year's record results. Kingsdown continued the trend of year on year improvement with the highest results in the school's history. Outstanding results were achieved in Maths and English as well as triple Science and many other subjects. Traditional GCSEs are studied and we are delighted with this year's outcomes surpassing the Swindon average improvement figures. Staff and students are rightly proud of the achievements made.

Some individual successes include:

Nicole Dhillon with 7 A*, 3As and a B

Lucy Castle with 6 A*, 4 As and a B

Adam Hobbs with 6 A*, 3 As and 2 Bs

Secondly:

As a good school with outstanding features we were invited to become an Academy and this transition took place on the 1st of August. The staff and students will not notice any significant differences as the main benefits are in the leadership and management choices that we are now entitled to make.

Thirdly:

There have been a number of significant refurbishments over the summer break. Our newly acquired Sports Centre is now looking fantastic. The dance studio is magnificent and the library has been refreshed and new carpets laid. We have a new eating area and catering facilities. You are welcome to come and look at these on our open evening on Wednesday 21st September. A formal opening of the Sports Centre will take place later this term.



As you may be aware we sadly lost one of our teachers in the final term. We also lost a member of the support team. Both brave women lost their battles against cancer and passed away in the Prospect Hospice. The staff of Kingsdown School will be raising money for the Prospect in memory of Sam Staff and Julie Dixon alongside the many people that have received support and care from this wonderful facility. Details can be found later in this newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that we have a "Park & Stride" arrangement with the Kingsdown Arms and the Sports Centre. You can drop off and pick up your children from both of these car parks. Space is limited on school site and therefore access is restricted to taxis and disabled badge drivers only to ensure the health and safety of all. Please avoid parking in the bus lay-bys and avoid parking in the entrance to the Kingsdown Sports Centre.

The students have started the term in a really positive manner and we wish this to continue throughout the year. Winter uniform is in place and should be worn. Details can be found in the student handbooks and on the school website.

Best wishes for another successful year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Conaghan".

Wendy Conaghan, Headteacher

Fundraising - Swindon Half Marathon



We will be running, walking and crawling our way through the Swindon Half Marathon, the multi terrain run or the fun run on 9th October to raise money for the Prospect Hospice. The hospice does an incredible job caring for the terminally ill and providing support for their families. In recent months, two members of staff have been cared for at the Hospice. Both Julie Dixon, a member of our support team and Sam Staff, a teacher at the School, were cared for by the staff at the hospice who through a highly professional and understanding approach were supportive at a very difficult time.

Sam and Julie were both incredibly positive people whose attitude to life should be an example to us all.

Please help if you can and donate by visiting our fundraising page at <http://www.justgiving.com/Kingsdown-School>. Thank you.

Mr Lowe, Deputy Headteacher

UNIFORM

THANK YOU ALL FOR SENDING YOUR CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL LOOKING SO SMART.
PLEASE BE AWARE THAT CANVAS SHOES/DAPS OR TRAINERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BE
WORN IN SCHOOL.

A COPY OF THE FULL UNIFORM POLICY CAN BE FOUND ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE.

KINGSDOWN SCHOOL FRIENDS ASSOCIATION (KSFA)

The Kingsdown School Friends Association (KSFA) works hard to raise money for students of Kingsdown School, and are planning several fund raising events this year, although dates have yet to be confirmed:

Late September/Early October - Year 7 Disco
November - Year 11 Prom Fair
December - Quiz Night

Our other main fundraiser is the Kingsdown lottery. It only costs £5 every 3 months and you could win £150, £75 or £25 in the quarterly draw. Contact Mrs Watkins at the school (awatkins@kingsdownschool.co.uk) if you would like further information.

We have raised over £3,000 recently to pay for the new carpeting in the Learning Resource Centre (the Library), so your involvement is always appreciated. If you would like to join the KSFA committee, the annual general meeting is being held on Tuesday 11th October, 6.00pm at the school in the Learning Resource Centre.

Mrs Watkins, KSFA

Exam Invigilation?

Are you:

Reliable & Punctual?

Flexible?

Accurate?

A Confident Communicator?

Firm but fair?

Comfortable under pressure?

Exams are among the most important and stressful events in the life of a learner. That's why it's so important they are conducted in the correct way. Invigilators are crucial to this process.

Invigilators help to make sure the right candidates are in the right places. They give out vital information such as start & finish times for exams and ensure candidates have all the materials and information needed for each exam.

Working as a team, invigilators contribute to ensuring a calm environment for the exams, giving candidates confidence in the process.

We are looking for more invigilators to help oversee our exams. It is a part-time role for around 8 weeks of the year.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact:

Mrs Harmer (Exams Officer, Kingsdown School)

01793 837150

Email: charmer@kingsdownschool.co.uk

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2011 - 2012 House Captains

Lydiard

Nicole Cox
Will Harding

Stanton

Erin Masters
Travis Marchant

Coate

Jess Harvey
Chessie Perrett

TD Days 2011/12

Friday 30th September

Monday 31st October

Tuesday 3rd January

Monday 16th April

Monday 23rd July

Yr6 Open Evening

Please note that the school will be closing for students at 12.55pm on Wednesday 21st September as this is the Y6 Open Evening.

NEWS FROM THE LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE



The Swindon Youth Festival of Literature will take place from 7th-11th November.

These are just some of the events and activities planned for Kingsdown students during the Festival:

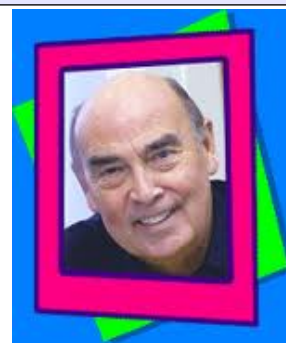
We are looking forward to welcoming authors, Marcus Sedgwick and Bernard Ashley to Kingsdown School.



Marcus Sedgwick will be in school on Tuesday, 8th November. Find out about Marcus on:

www.marcussedgwick.com/Marcus_Sedgwick/Home.html

Bernard Ashley - check him out on www.bashley.com/biog.htm



Bernard will be visiting Kingsdown on Thursday, 10th November.

THE CHAINSAW GANG

The Headline event of the Festival week will be at the Wyvern Theatre on Wednesday, 9th November. Knees will be knocking; spines will be shivering when students across Swindon's Secondary Schools experience up close, Zombies, Vampires, Dragons, Werewolves and a graveyard full of things that go bump in the night courtesy of the

The Chainsaw Gang. Authors, **Alex Bell, Sarwat Chadda, Stephen Deas, William Hussey and Alexander Gordon Smith** will deliver a rush of adrenalin to Swindon's student readers! 50 seats will be up for grabs for Kingsdown Students.

There will be a range of Inter-School activities throughout the Festival week including:

'Fastest Story in the West' - collaborative speed-writing story event.

'Quiz' - Inter-school Book Quiz.

'Illustration Competition' - Creation of illustrations from a section of text taken from the Carnegie winning title of 2011.

'Creative Writing Competition' - 500 words inspired by an image.



There will be a chance to see Poet, Ash Dickinson, at Isambard School on Friday, 11th November

A group of our Year 10 art students will be selected to take part in an **Illustration workshop** with local professional artist, Fred Blunt, who will be in school on Tuesday, 8th November.

If you would like to enter the Illustration Competition or Short Story Competition, please see LRC staff for details.

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C

We are delighted with the work that has taken place in the LRC over the summer holidays. We have had restricted use of the LRC in the first few days of the new term whilst we are busy unpacking our library books, but we will very shortly be able to resume normal business! A big 'THANK YOU' to the KSFA who made such a generous donation to help with the cost of the work.

Remember our LEARNING CAFÉ is available for students after school every day:

The Learning Café takes place in the Learning Resource Centre: **Mon-Thurs 3.25pm-5.00pm**
Friday 12.55pm-3.30pm

Students are able to use the computers, books and printers for completing homework/coursework. Refreshments are available too!

Our Student Librarians last academic year were a fantastic help during busy breaks and lunchtimes - a very big thank you to you all! Also, thank you to those students who have expressed a wish to be Student Librarians this year.

Mrs. Curtis & Mrs. Longthorne



Attention Year 7 students!

You will be able to choose a free book from the government funded 'Booked Up' scheme - details of the books on offer will be sent to you shortly.

Take a look at www.bookedup.org.uk

Advance Notice!

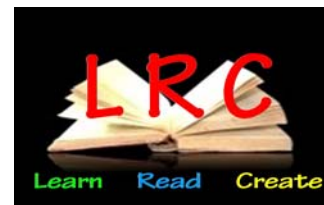


We will be holding a Book Fair just before we break up for the Christmas holidays, from 6th - 13th December. Books can make ideal Christmas presents and the more books we sell, the more free books we can claim for your school library!



Kingsdown School has a lot of enthusiastic readers! Over 13,000 library books were issued during the last academic year!

Any students who did not manage to return their library books before the summer holidays are reminded that they need to return them as soon as possible please.



Great News, Extra Space funding is available for another year!



Extra Space funding is to support children with activities they may not be otherwise able to do. Any child on free school meals or who is looked after is able to benefit. This is a fantastic opportunity! Your child could access lots of activities from ice skating to rock climbing, designing video games to acting classes.

It couldn't be easier to organise, all it takes is a quick 5 minute chat to arrange . To find out more please call Lesley Bayliss on 837152 .

Want to learn an Instrument?


Every year 7 and 8 child will be offered the opportunity to learn an instrument at a cost of £15 per term. Interested?

Go to the Extended Services Web Page to sign up!



Congratulations to our year 9 girls who through their parent seeing an advertisement for volunteers in Nationwide Building Society decided to give up part of their summer holiday to help clean a wildlife area at Beechcroft Infant School!

Adult Learning

Cake Decorating  **(Beginners)**

Monday 19/09/11 6.00-8.00pm 5 Weeks Cost: £10.00

Basic Computers 

Wednesday 21/09/11 4.30-6.30pm 6 Weeks Cost: £15.00

Email 

Thursday 29/09/11 4.30-6.30pm 3 Weeks Cost: £10.00

EBay Buying 

Tuesday 04/10/11 4.30-6.30pm 3 Weeks Cost: £10.00

Facebook 

Thursday 03/11/11 4.30-6.30pm 3 Weeks Cost £10.00

EBay Selling 

Tuesday 08/11/11 4.30-6.30pm 3 Weeks Cost £10.00

Digital Pictures 

Tuesday 03/01/12 4.30-6.30pm 6 Weeks Cost £15.00

All of the above courses are for adults only and will be based at Kingsdown School. Please call 01794 837152 to book a place.

Holiday requests

The Local Authority, in line with Government Policy, is continuing to drive schools in improving attendance of all students. There is a particular emphasis on holidays in term time and persistent absence.

Kingsdown aims towards zero unauthorised absence, and **minimum** 90% attendance for all students.

It has been decided, as part of our review of School Attendance that:

- Holidays in term time will not be authorised unless there is a history of 90% attendance or there are Exceptional Circumstances. (Cases for Exceptional Circumstances will be made in writing to the Headteacher who will make the final decision).
- There will also be 'zero tolerance periods' for authorisation eg controlled assessments, exams, first two weeks of Academic year
- Persistent absence or any illness not deemed to be genuine, may not be authorised without medical evidence.
- Persistent unauthorised absence of any student may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

Please see below some Questions and Answers on attendance.

So 90% attendance is good?

It's not bad but should be a lot better. Any less than 90% and your child cannot do their best.

So what is poor attendance?

Education Welfare Officers work closely with school attendance and become very concerned at 86% and below, legal action may be taken in some cases.

My child is entitled to 10 days holiday each year

NO the Government frowns on holidays being taken in term time. A Headteacher **may** authorise up to **10** days but only if they feel there is no direct impact on a child's education. 10 days absence means 95% attendance (this allows only 9 days over the year for illness).

What does Genuine Illness mean?

High Temperatures, Diarrhoea and Sickness, Childhood ailments eg measles, tonsillitis are genuine illness.

A child should not be kept home with minor coughs, colds, tummy aches and headaches etc.

Can I take long weekends and odd days as holidays?

Not really, again the Government does not encourage this. Too many Mondays and Fridays missed would not be good for achievement. You cannot request a holiday for a day out eg birthday treat.

What do these figures mean?

90% attendance at the end of a school year means your child has been absent on **19 days**.

85% attendance at the end of a school year means your child has been absent on **26.5 days**.

What does Persistent Absence mean?

In simple terms any child that continues to have low attendance through the year will have persistent absence.

Lots of odd days illness that break many school weeks will cause this.

What does Zero tolerance mean?

Holidays will not be authorised for Y10s and Y11s and also during:

- First two weeks in September
- GCSE
- SAT
- Controlled Assessments
- Internal examinations

Holiday requests (cont...)

What does a penalty notice mean?

The Local Authority can fine each parent £50 for each child. This means a family with two parents and two children could face a fine of £200 for unauthorised absence.

Can a fine be paid in instalments?

NO a fine must be paid in full within 4 weeks or it will double. Failure to pay at all will lead to prosecution.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

If you want your child to do his/her best they must be in school at least 90% of the time. That means no more than 19 days absence in one school year.

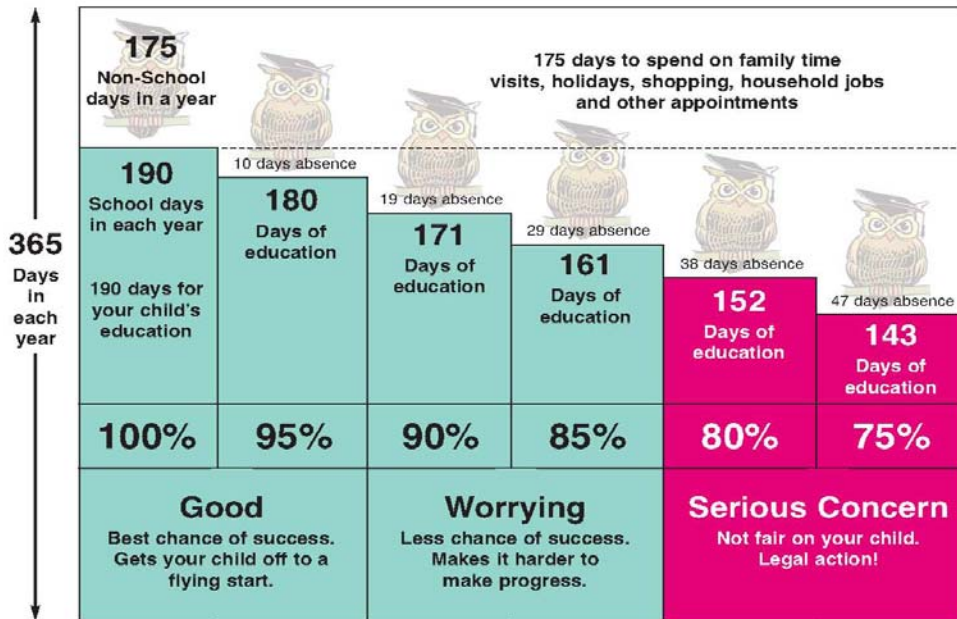
We want your child to do their best and will not authorise holidays unless they have a history of 90% attendance.

The Education Officer is Jacqui Baines who can be reached on 465800 for further advice.

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS!



- Days off school add up to lost learning.
- Please don't let your children miss out on the education they deserve.
- Every school day counts.



If you are worried about your child's attendance please talk to your school about it or contact The Education Welfare Service on 01793 463095

www.swindon.gov.uk

Produced by Swindon Education Welfare Service

Ref. ED0059

Key Dates for your Diary

21st Sept	School closes for students at 12.55pm Year 6 Open Evening
26th Sept	European Day of Languages
27th Sept	Y11 Parents Evening
30th Sept	TD Day - school closed to students
4th Oct	HPV Vaccinations - Y8 Girls Only
5th Oct	Y7 Welcome Evening
12th Oct	KSFA AGM Distar Parents Evening
20th - 28th Oct	Half Term
31st Oct	TD Day - school closed to students
7th - 11th Nov	Swindon Youth Festival of Literature
8th Nov	HPV Vaccinations - Y8 Girls Only Recital Evening
9th Nov	Parents Evening for Controlled Assessments
14th - 18th Nov	Anti-bullying Week
8th Nov	Presentation Evening Y11 Mock Interview Day
24th Nov	Academic Tutoring Day
28th Nov - 2nd Dec	Mock Exam Week
8th Dec	Christmas Concert
12th Dec	Church Christmas Concert
13th Dec	Senior Citizen Christmas Concert
14th Dec	KSFA
16th Dec	Y11 Mock Exam Results School closes at 12.55pm

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A colour version of the In Touch newsletter can be found
on the school
website; www.kingsdownschool.co.uk