



27th June 2024

Dear Parents & Carers

I wanted to talk to you today about first impressions. We know just how important these are in the world outside school, especially the world of work, but also in society as a whole. Every day we are working hard to support your child, in the basic, but hugely important components of how we make a good first impression.

In the morning, every single day, I greet all our students on the gate, with a good morning and I wish them a good day. A lot of Headteachers don't do this. The call of emails and the demands of a busy job can make it very tempting to be at my desk, getting things done, rather than on the gate. But I'm there for two reasons. I want every child who comes to Warlingham School & Sixth Form College to experience that warm, welcoming and friendly sense of community and to feel seen and a sense of belonging to our school. But also it's a great opportunity for students to practise making a good first impression and it's a genuinely positive experience for me, every day. The number of children who do this well is significant, returning my greeting with a good morning, sir, or a good morning Mr. Foster, wishing me a good day too. Occasionally some forget about the mutual respect that is the foundation of our school culture and I need to remind them add a Sir or a Mr. Foster and to engage positively. I would really appreciate you, as parents, talking to your son or daughter, about why this is so important and how easy it is to get right with just six words 'Good morning, Sir'. and 'You too, Sir'.

There have been two days of induction for the New Year 7 cohort for September. It has been a really lovely two days this week, despite the heat, to see those students who've made an excellent first impression. It is a credit to you, as parents and to their primary schools as to how they are arriving at school. I am exceptionally excited about what they will bring to our school community and their successes in the future, here at Warlingham School & Sixth Form College.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is to make you aware of a change to the school from September, the reasons for it and how it will affect your child, as well as the things that won't change. From September, we will be changing our pastoral leadership structure from one with Heads of Houses to Heads of Years. Managing and supporting the complex needs of 300 students aged from 11 to 16, across different year groups is really difficult. It is very hard to meet the pastoral needs of all those students and successfully narrate their journey through school, in a way that's appropriate to their age and their stage. To improve that ability and to develop a Year Group identity as well as, not instead of the House identity, we will ensure that we have a Head of Year for your son or daughter as opposed to a Head of House as the main pastoral lead and the Deputy Head of Year in support of them. We will still have tutors very much aligned to Houses, but also as Year Group teams too.

We are not abandoning the House system, we will still have Houses and uniform with the House colours. Will have House competitions and that tradition of healthy rivalry and a sense of belonging across different Year Groups that the House system gives us. However, the main leaders of that pastoral care will be the Heads of Year and Deputy Heads of Year. I will share who will undertake these roles in the different Year Groups in due course.

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Finally, from me, just a reminder that tomorrow is an inset day. So while I will be in school, as with all the teachers doing training, it is not a day of school for your son or daughter. I hope they enjoy it their day and that the good weather remains and you and your family have a lovely weekend.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Foster', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr P Foster

Headteacher