

MCi/jbr

19<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I hope the new year has started well for all of you and brings all of us health and success. Of course by the time you read this letter you will probably have seen the latest round of publicity regarding the official publication of the 2010 examination league tables. For Pent Valley this meant the fourth year in a row of improved examination results. This now means that across Shepway we are the only school amongst all of the Grammars, Academies and High schools to have achieved improved results consistently across all four years since 2006. In actual fact across all the secondary schools in Kent there are only a very few that can claim this same level of success. I would like to express my congratulations to all the teachers and students whose hard work has resulted in this success. Of course I am also very aware of how the support from families has also been a significant factor in this success. The vast majority of the students who achieved these results in 2010 are of course now in Dyson Mini School and so now facing the new challenges which Post-16 and advanced level study brings, not least of all decisions about University applications including which courses and how far from home to travel. Students in Year 13 of course are well down this road and again early indications are that despite the Government cut backs on the number of University places and funding, that a larger number than ever before at Pent Valley are planning to continue their studies through to University. I know that Dyson staff continue to advise and support all of these ambitious young people.

**Year 11 developments** - On the same day that the league tables were published nationally, we also received the results of our current Year 11 students' early entry for English and Mathematics GCSE. We have now been using this strategy of early entries to boost students' eventual grades for a number of years. We have found that the strategy has been highly successful and allows many students to gain their target grade for English and Mathematics and so then concentrate their time on other subjects to ensure they meet their targets in those subjects too. The results year on year speak for themselves in terms of how successful this has been. Also each year we have higher and higher proportions achieving the top grades and this year has been no exception. In fact currently we have 43% of students who have achieved at least a grade C in English and 37% who achieved at least a grade C in Mathematics. Overall just over 30% already have at least a grade C in both subjects. Of course it is important to remember that for those students who have not yet achieved their target in either English or Mathematics they still have lessons which will continue all the way through to June when they then get another chance to enter the examination.

By the time families receive this letter Mini Schools will have already spoken to those whose children have achieved their target grades in English and Mathematics. As well as offering personal congratulations the families will also have been informed of a new programme we are running which we are calling *Flexilearn*. This is a programme which enables us to change the timing of the school day and of course the timetable for those students who have achieved the target grades through early entry and so no longer need to attend lessons in English and Mathematics or perhaps both. This enables these students to attend school at a different time and so have access to staff who would otherwise be timetabled to work with other classes. This will enable these students to increase the number of qualifications they are working towards. For some of these students it will also allow them to arrange and take part in further work experience opportunities and for some the opportunity to start their Advanced Level studies within Dyson Mini School. The other advantage of this programme is that it means that the teachers of English and Mathematics who would have been teaching these Year 11 classes are now free to start focusing on other groups of students who have yet to achieve their targets. I want to thank families and students who have responded very positively to this new initiative

and also want to confirm that we will of course evaluate the success of this programme before we decide whether or not to implement it as part of future years' programmes.

**Careers education** - As you will be aware from parent/carer consultation evenings and your child's careers interviews, the school works very closely with Connexions, they offer an Information and Advice Service. The last Ofsted inspection in 2010 judged the careers education as a strength in the school. By working closely with Connexions we have ensured that when students have left compulsory education that there is continuity into further/higher education, training or employment. Last year over 98% of our Year 11 students continued in one of these routes. However, it may be that some parents/carers would prefer for their child not to take part in this successful intervention. If you do not want Connexions to work with your child could you please email the Careers Co-ordinator, Mr T D Fenley on tom.fenley@pent-valley.kent.sch.uk by Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

**The Pent Valley Portal** - As explained in my last letter our new portal is now being rolled out to all families. Along with this letter all families will also find a separate letter which includes a secure username and password for each family. Families who have more than one child at the school will notice that the username and password will be the same for each child. We have decided to do this in order to make the administration of the portal more user friendly for families.

At this initial stage families will be able to access and check their child's personal details which we hold on our system. Of course if any of these are wrong it will be quick and easy to either e-mail or contact relevant members of the Mini School to make the necessary changes. In addition families will be able to see at a glance their child's merits and punctuality. Details such as timetables and the teachers who teach their child will also be accessible. An important aspect is that through the portal families can also now access the Independent Learning Projects (ILP's). Last year we issued these to every child every term on CD. We have now transferred these onto the portal. Once families access these they will see that they simply need to select the year group their child is in and then they will have access to the relevant ILPs. Of course these will be updated each term. As always I very much hope that families give us feedback on how the portal works and any further developments they want to see. Our intention is that each successive term we will add a new feature to the portal and so gradually increase its functionality.

**Our Dress Code** - It was noticeable on our return from the Christmas break that a number of students had decided that it would be appropriate to wear a new item of clothing which perhaps they received as a present! Needless to say that Mini Schools were very quick to respond to this and again within less than a week we have again established the high standards of appearance which we have had since September. I would again thank and encourage families to insist that their children leave home in the correct uniform. On those rare occasions when this is not possible, to contact the school or send their child into school with a letter of explanation.

**Year 8 and Year 9 Parent Consultation Evenings and Options Evenings** - Over the course of February and March there will be two evenings for families of students in Year 8 and two evenings for families of students in Year 9. These will be important times for staff and parents to meet to discuss progress and then the option evenings will allow students and families to begin to consider appropriate subjects to choose for their GCSE options.

**Parent Questionnaire responses** - Since my last letter last term we have held a Year 11 Parent Consultation evening and attached to this letter you will see the responses from that questionnaire. Again I want to thank parents for taking the time to complete these. The results are always analysed and this then feeds into our review of the school especially when considering how to improve our practice.

**Important Dates:**

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011, 10.00 am

25<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011

Headteacher Surgery

GCSE & GCE exams continuing

10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, 4.00 pm  
17<sup>th</sup> February 2011, 4.00 pm  
18<sup>th</sup> February 2011  
25<sup>th</sup> February 2011  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, 4.00 pm

Dyson Parent Consultation Evening  
Year 9 Parent Consultation Evening  
End of term 4  
Beginning of term 5  
Year 9 Options Evening

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Citro'. The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

MR M CITRO  
Headteacher  
PENT VALLEY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE