



Queen Mary's Grammar School

A message from the Headmaster, February 2023

First word

I hope that all members of the community have had a restful half term break. If you haven't seen the pictures and videos from the ski trip in the USA, take a look on the School's [Twitter](#) account. There's also lots on there about other activities at the end of last term, including the fabulous music concert, a wide range of sports results and full coverage of the fantastic mental health week events. I am grateful to all staff who have made these possible. Highlights of the concert can be viewed [here](#). It's a short half term until Easter, but there is still lots going on and I have included some key dates later in this newsletter.

National teacher strikes

Please refer to the [letter](#) sent on Friday 17th February, with regards to the upcoming teacher strikes and the impact on student programmes. The next one of these takes place on Wednesday 1st March and most students will have a day of online learning via MS Teams.

Spring Concert Wednesday 29th March 7.30pm (Mr Vause)

An opportunity to hear music from the School's many ensembles, orchestra, jazz band, choir, training band, Clarinet ensemble and more. Tickets are £5 from [ticket source](#).

Farchynys Maintenance Weekend (Mr Hudson)

We are planning a cleaning & maintenance weekend at Farchynys over 25/26 March. This is open to anyone connected to the QM community including staff, parents, and alumni. No specific skills are required – there will be a variety of jobs including cleaning, decorating, gardening, and DIY tasks to complete. If you are interested in being part of this, please contact Mr Hudson via the enquiries@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk email address.

Queen Mary's Association

The QMA hosted a fabulous Burns night ball on Saturday 28th January, with over 200 people in attendance. The pictures can be seen on the QMA's [Twitter account](#). Thank you to everyone who was involved in planning the event and to those who attended and bought raffle tickets. Just under £5000 was raised, with all proceeds going towards the School's Future Sports campaign.

Our final event of the year will be a summer arts and music festival, taking place on Saturday 8th July. It will include lots of student performances and there will be some great food and refreshment. Watch this space for details.

Each event has a committee to run it and we have a separate group who manage the running of the bar. We also have a separate group to support Farchynys, including a maintenance weekend on 25/26 March. If you are interested in supporting the work of the QMA, please contact Prveen Kataria-Raulia (alumni officer) at: alumni@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk. Also, please contact us if you can provide a good quality raffle prize for any of the events. I have also included a summary of the progress made on Easy Fundraising at the end of this email. This is a simple and effective way of supporting the school through your online shopping.

National Online Safety Centre

The School are now signed up to the National Online Safety Centre. Mr Lally recently [wrote to parents](#) about how you can create an account. We will be sending out regular updates on specific E-safety matters. We will be providing monthly E-safety updates. This month, we focus on artificial intelligence and the parental guide can be found on page 8.

Future Sport @ QMGS: A community legacy project

I have spoken at various events about our £1.8million Future Sports @ QMGS project, designed to revolutionise our outdoor sports facilities. I have included some plans below and will be speaking after a series of sports fixtures across the remainder of the academic year. Please see the separate flyer for the games involved and come along both to support your child and to find out how you can support the campaign.



PROJECT PLANS

Above: Pavilion and viewing gallery

Left: Aerial view of facilities

Below: Pavilion view from artificial grass pitch

Bottom left: Pavilion view from side

Bottom right: Artificial grass pitch for hockey and tennis



National careers week: Monday 6th-Friday 10th March (Mr Sunley)

Throughout the week:

- **NCW daily e-newsletter for all pupils** - with links to after-school webinars and online activities
- **Alumni Lunchtime Sessions – Monday, Tuesday and Friday**
 - Open to all year groups and staff
 - Lecture Theatre, 1.20 - 1.55pm. [1.00pm-2.00pm on Friday]
 - Full details below – ***please encourage pupils to attend and prompt them to complete the pre-event MS Form*** which has been e-mailed out to all pupils. Link [here](#)

Form Time:

- Years 7 – 9: NHS Careers Competition
- Year 10: Introduction to Unifrog and Virtual Careers Fair
- Year 11: Continuation of Unifrog access and Virtual Careers Fair

Monday 6th March

- **KS3 Assembly:** PSu – Launch the week and the #stepintoNHS competition which links to the Form Time Activities
- **Form Time Programme**
- **Periods 1 and 2:** Y12/13 Economics to attend a talk in the lecture theatre from the Bank of England
- **Lunchtime Alumni Careers Meet (Lecture Theatre):** *Oba Akinwale [2005-10] – Commercial Director of Loudspeaker - a social values-based organisation providing public speaking and confidence-building workshops for young people.*

Tuesday 7th March

- **KS4 Assembly:** RJL - launch the week and 'Next Steps Presentation' which links to the Form Time Activities
- **Form Time Programme**
- **Lunchtime Alumni Careers Meet (Lecture Theatre):** *Jamaal Butt [2012-18] – Medicine Undergraduate [4th Year]*

Wednesday 8th March

- **Form Time Programme**

Thursday 9th March

- **KS5 Assembly:** RJM/PSu/RJL
- **Form Time Programme**
- **Year 12 Higher Education Fair – Thursday afternoon [12.00 – 4.00pm]**
 - Year 12 to attend during Periods 5 & 6 [timings and schedule to follow from Mr Matley]
 - Year 11 and 13 welcome to attend at LUNCHTIME
 - It will be open until 4pm to allow other students to attend at the end of the school day

Friday 10th March

Form Time Programme

Lunchtime Alumni Careers Meet (Lecture Theatre): *Careers Surgery [All Year Groups Welcome]*

- Drop-in throughout the lunch hour for informal careers conversations
- Come and meet former pupils, teaching staff and careers advisors to hear about their career journeys and gain some careers advice and support on next steps.

Mental health and wellbeing

The School continues to support staff and students with their wellbeing through the usual communication channels. Any member of the school community can raise concerns via the wellbeing email address well-being@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk or by using the QR code below.



This account is monitored by the SEMH team and is checked regularly:

- Mr Collins (Assistant Head and DSL)
- Mr Farnell (Safeguarding and Welfare Officer)
- Ms Burgess (SEMH mentor)
- Mrs Mohan (6th Form Operations Manager)

Cost of living support (Mrs Youngman)

We are very aware of the current economic challenges and want to support our families as much as possible. Mrs Youngman sets out two initiatives below and parents can view other resources both on our [website](#) and through [Walsall council](#).

QMGS Breakfast Club (Mrs Hill)

The breakfast Club, in partnership with the National Schools Breakfast Programme, offers free bagels and spreads every morning from 8am until 8.30am in the Canteen - all pupils welcome! Click on the [link](#) for more information on the National Schools Breakfast Programme, weekend breakfast ideas and quizzes

Pre-loved Uniform Store (Mrs Hill)

"Thank you to parents and alumni alike who have generously donated uniform and sports kit to our Pre-loved Uniform Store. This is always very much appreciated. We have a healthy stock of pre-loved items, so please do contact Mrs Hill at d.hill@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk if any items are required."

Food hampers (Mrs Hill)

Thanks to Balbir Seimar and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Branch and thanks also to Adil and Aayan Parkar from the Masjid Al Falaah Mosque who kindly donate food hampers to support our families and the community. Please contact Mrs Hill at d.hill@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk if your family would benefit from a food hamper.

Holiday Activities Programme (HAF) from Walsall Council

Please see p9 for details on the Walsall Council Holiday Activities Programme (HAF).

Homework club

Homework club is running again this term, on a Monday-Thursday. More information can be found on the School's [website](#).

SIMS Parentapp

The majority of school communication, including Reports, is sent by email and Parent App so it is crucial that you keep your contact details updated. Please check your account and ensure you can access it. If you have any access issues please email parentapp@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk for assistance. Please send any updates of parental contact details to absences@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk

Summer exam updates

OFQUAL have updated their guidance to support students in 2023 Summer exams, which can be found via this [link](#).

Catering

Full details of the School's catering offer can be found the [website](#). I have also included a letter on p4 from Innovate, with regards to price changes that come into effect later this term.



Innovate IFG

Dear Parent / Guardian

Our aim as a school food provider is to deliver great food at affordable prices for our students and parents. The cost-of-living crisis continues which we are all experiencing in our own lives, with prices in supermarkets and other daily costs rising almost weekly. This has in turn impacted the prices we pay for food and the wages we pay our teams. I wanted to write to you to let you know what we are doing to try to limit the impact on students and parents.

There are two issues which the food industry is needing to deal with:

1. Food inflation at 16%
2. Staff wage increases 9.7%

Food inflation

This is predominantly driven by the war in Ukraine, which is not only a terrible humanitarian crisis, but has also significantly damaged economies across the globe and has had a real impact on food availability. The food supply volumes have dropped and driven prices up. The latest food inflation figures reported, show a 16% increase in the cost of the food we buy.

Staff wage increases

The Government has increased the minimum wage by 9.7%. This is a positive move that will mean our teams are better able to address the cost pressures they are under. This is more than 3% higher than last year's record rise, so great progress but clearly creates its own challenge from a funding perspective.

To address these cost increases we must raise the prices we charge in our school canteens. We have looked at all options to minimize the increases such as changes to suppliers and adding some new product lines. But we must not allow these pressures to impact the quality of the food, nor the portion sizes we provide. We have also absorbed some of the cost increases, however we will be implementing a tariff increase of **5% from April 2023**. Whilst this is never going to be good news, we hope you will agree that it is a significantly lower than the headline figures above.

As always, we will continue to encourage open and honest dialogue with clients, students and parental groups to ensure we have a joined-up approach during this challenging period. We have a difficult twelve to eighteen months to navigate through, but I personally give you my commitment to continue to serve food of the highest quality, that represents good value for our students, parents, and schools.

Kindest regards

Ken Navin
Client Relationship Director

Impact Food Group Ltd

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E: hello@impactfood.co.uk

Registered in England and Wales

Company Reg No 11096050



Dates for your diary

The full school calendar can be found the [School website](#), but I have included some key dates for the Spring term below:

Wed 1 Mar	NEU strike action
Thu 2 Mar	Year 12 parents' evening
W/B 6 Mar	National careers week
Thu 9 Mar	Year 7 parents' evening
15/16 Mar	NEU strike action
Wed 22 Mar	Performance of the Queen's Players
Thu 23 Mar	Year 8 parents' evening
Fri 24 Mar	CCF field day
Wed 29 Mar	Easter music concert
Thu 30 Mar	End of term for students (3.40pm)
Fri 31 Mar	Staff training day
Mon 17 Apr	Staff training day
Tue 18 Apr	Summer term starts for students (8.45am)

Absences for appointments and religious observance

May I remind parents/carers, as per the [Attendance Policy](#), the below process for absences relating to appointments during the school day:

- Medical appointments should be arranged outside of school time wherever possible
- The school must be notified a minimum of 3 days in advance of any medical appointment that have been made. Without this prior notification and proof of the appointment, the absence will be marked as unauthorised
- This notification should be sent to absences@qmgs.merciantrust.org.uk with a copy of the appointment notification
- If you are attending the appointment from school you are required to collect your child from Reception and sign them out using the Exeat Book, you will need to sign them back in on their return
- If the appointment is before school you are required to accompany your child back into school and sign the Exeat Book
- Parents are not allowed to drive onto the school site, please park off site legally and with consideration for local residents
- Parents need to ensure that their child is aware of what time he/she is being collected. The student will be responsible for making their way to Reception so that they are ready for collection when you arrive to sign them out.
- If you require some absence for the purpose of religious observance, please complete and return the form which is available on the school website via this [link](#)

Traffic and parking around the School

I recently wrote to parents with regards to traffic around the school site. This letter can be found [here](#). Please continue to work with us in making the school environment a safer place. In particular, please consider the following:

- Not undertaking dangerous manoeuvres (such as U-turns or overtaking) on Sutton Road or surrounding streets
- Not parking inconsiderably near to resident driveways
- Not using access roads or resident only parking areas
- Dropping the students further away from school
- Encouraging the student to use public transport

- Walking or cycling; a helmet must be worn when cycling and students should make sure they are fully visible (through lights and clothing) in the winter months
- A white line has now been installed at the entrance to the flats on the corner of Princes Avenue and Sutton Road. The white line should NOT be crossed under any circumstances

Parents driving onsite

A reminder that the general rule is that parents should not drive onto site unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been pre-arranged.

Final word

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to seeing you at a school event soon.

Mr Langton



We have currently raised £4,864.18, from 276 supporters. The top 4 supporters have raised £1303.35 between them!

One supporter has raised a magnificent £521.09 thus far! Just imagine what we could raise if every household signed up, and used, Easyfundraising. It would help us to provide even more opportunities and facilities for our young people. Please support this initiative which does not cost you anything as it is the retailers who donate on your behalf based upon the amount that you spend with them.

We need your help to raise much needed funds!

- easyfundraising has over 4,400 shops and sites which will donate to us at no extra cost to yourself, including lots of big name retailers like John Lewis, Argos, Uswitch, eBay, M&S, Just Eat, Now TV, Domino's Pizza and Audible.
- Donations are applied on everyday brands and shopping outlets such as Amazon (Up to 1.5%), TK Max (1%), George at Asda (5%), Selfridges (8%), M&S (Up to 3%), Argos (3%), Groupon (Up to 8%)
- There are big donations on travel bookings. A small selection is below but there are many more:
 - Expedia (Up to 5%)
 - Trainline 2.5%
 - Travelodge 2%
 - Haven Holidays 2.5%
 - Booking.Com 4%
 - Crystal Ski Holidays 0.5%
 - TUI 2%
 - First Choice 1.5%
- All you have to do is sign up to support us using the link below and the next time you shop online go through the easyfundraising website or App and we'll receive a free donation.
- We really need all the help we can get at the moment and any funds we raise will make a big difference to us!
- You can find our easyfundraising page at this [link](#)

Thank you

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) SOLUTIONS

AI solutions are becoming increasingly popular. Trained on vast datasets of text (such as books, articles and websites) in order to learn patterns and relationships, AI solutions can generate text, images, audio, video, code or synthetic data, and can be used for things such as crafting poems or books, creating digital imagery or delivering video content. Recently there's been significant discussion in relation to the benefits and risks of AI solutions, with many undecided on whether it will be a force for good or potentially reduce the need for some job roles.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ROOM FOR INACCURACY

AI solutions, such as language models, generate their responses purely based on the data they've been trained on, which often comes from sources on the Internet. Whilst questions will often illicit relevant responses, if some of the information they've been 'fed' is incorrect, it follows that the answers too may contain factual errors or inaccuracies.

REINFORCING BIAS

AI solutions, such as those generating content or images, can perpetuate existing biases present in the data they were trained, whether through the algorithms written by humans or the content taken from the web. This could easily lead to biased responses and potentially reinforce existing stereotypes, such as those around gender, race or disability.

IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

AI solutions don't have the ability to understand the context or meaning behind a question or a user request. Although highly advanced, the AI relies entirely on the data it's been exposed to and is devoid of independent thought or reasoning, which could lead to irrelevant or even nonsensical responses to queries.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Fundamentally, AI solutions are machines or technology programmes that don't have the ability to take responsibility for the responses they generate. This could lead to confusion or misunderstandings in certain cases if the answers are taken as given. For instance, image-generative AIs can lead to output clearly derived from other peoples' content but without any attribution to the original source artist's work.

STIFLING CREATIVITY

One of the potential risks of children and young people continually using AI solutions for things (such as their homework) is that eventually, they might become reliant on it. In the long term, this could potentially impact their development and hamper their ability to think creatively or solve problems independently without the aid of an AI tool.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If possible, try to be around when your child uses any type of AI solution and employ content filters to try and reduce the chance of profanity or age-inappropriate subjects appearing in responses. As with any kind of technology, it's important to ensure that children are using AI solutions responsibly and to be there to enable opportunities to discuss their use as part of a safe environment.

PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

Explain to your child that AI solutions can be used as one of many tools to help them research and learn, but that they shouldn't simply accept the responses they receive as the truth. Encourage them to question, verify and think critically about the information they get back – all of which apply equally to any website or platform they use.

DISCUSS BIAS

Talk to your child about the potential biases that may be present in the data that AI solutions are trained on, and how these viewpoints might find their way into the responses that AI generates. Again, with many things children might read online, it's healthy for them to consider whether the information is factual and presented fairly.

ENCOURAGE HUMAN INTERACTION

Not only should children supplement any use of software like AI with additional resources such as books and reputable internet sites, but they also should remember what they can learn from interaction with other people. Discussing things with teachers, relatives and friends isn't just an important and often invaluable aspect of learning – it's an essential part of life, too.

CHECK SCHOOL RULES

Make yourself aware of any rules or guidance your child's school might have about the use of AI solutions. Most software is still extremely new, so many schools may not yet have a policy, however, it's important to make sure your child is aware of how to use it appropriately and will be using it for the right reasons.

Meet Our Expert

Gary Henderson is the Deputy IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it's essential that adults and children alike become more aware of the risks associated with technology, as well as the many benefits.



NOS
National
Online
Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

Source: <https://www.cnet.com/tech/generative-ai/> | <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/ai/mckinsey-explores-what-generative-ai>

Holiday Activities Programme (HAF)

Walsall's Holiday Activities and Food programme
funded by the Department of Education (DfE)



What is the HAF?

The HAF is a free and exciting holiday programme for children and young people who are:

- aged 5 to 16
- eligible for benefit-related free school meals
- Have an EHCP
- Young carer

The programme runs over the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays.
It is funded by [the Department for Education \(DfE\)](#).

We are proud to work with a variety of providers to develop an exciting and enriching programme of activities. Our providers include schools, local voluntary and community groups, childcare providers and local businesses.

[Find out if your child is eligible.](#)

How to register for the HAF programme

You can register throughout the year.

Each eligible child should have received a letter with a unique code and information about how to register. If you haven't had a letter, you can [email us](#). You only need to register once for the 2023-2024 programme, and you can access your account throughout the year. You'll be able to book your Easter holiday activities from March 2023. [Log into your HAF account](#) to book.

Please see below some useful links:

- [HAF Website](#)
- [How to register video](#)

For further enquiries please email WR4C@walsall.gov.uk