



Queen Mary's Grammar School

A message from the Headmaster, September 2023

First word

It feels like quite a long time since I last wrote to the school community and there have certainly been lots of highlights since July. The summer edition of the [Queen Mary's Observer](#) sums up the activities at the end of last term. We were incredibly proud of the [exam results](#) achieved at GCSE and A-level, amidst a national headline of grade suppression. Recruitment into the sixth form has been buoyant and we are now a bigger school than ever, with over 1350 students! The start of term has been busy, and we have been speaking in school assembly about the vast array of opportunities available to the students at the school; encouraging them to make the most of their time. We have also reiterated our standards and expectations, as well as reminding students of the support mechanisms in place. Thank you to all parents who have attended the year group information evenings (Years 7, 10, 12) and the RSE information event early in the term. Copies of these presentations are available on the school [website](#). We continue to promote the life of the school through [social media](#), but parents will need to create an X account to see the posts of the various departmental accounts.

QMA events 2023-24

We have had a great response from new parents to support the QMA. We shall be holding an information evening on Thursday 28th September at 6.30pm in the main hall, to meet the committees and give out more information. The QMA donated £20,000 last year to the Future Sports @ QMGS project and we are looking to raise as much as we can this year for the same goal.

The dates for 2023-24 events are:

Taste of the World	Sat 2 Dec 2024
Burns Night	Sat 27 Jan 2024
QM Arts Festival	TBC July 2024

Each QMA 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 Farchyngs. If you are interested in supporting the work of the QMA, please us via: alumni@qmgs.merciantrust.org.uk.

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.

Mental health and wellbeing

The school continues to support staff and students with their wellbeing through the usual communication channels. We work with a number of organisations (such as Reflexions, as noted on p2). Any member of the school community can raise concerns via the wellbeing or safeguarding email addresses. These will be checked during the summer, but there may be some delay in response.

Qmgswell-being@qmgs.merciantrust.org.uk
qmgssafeguarding@qmgs.merciantrust.org.uk

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

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



Did you know Reflexions works within your child's school?

We are a mental health support team and we can help your child if they are experiencing difficult emotions or are struggling with their wellbeing!

Be kind to
your mind!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- We provide *low intensity, early intervention*.
- We can provide 6-8 sessions of interventions/support for your child.
- The interventions we deliver involve guided self-help to equip your child with coping skills.
- We ask children to complete tasks between their sessions with us to further help them manage how they're feeling.

Please contact your school mental health lead if you feel your child may need support!

Please know you and your child are not alone. Everyone has mental health and sometimes it deteriorates. Just as you'd seek medicine for a common cold, please seek support for common mental health difficulties!

We can support your child if they are experiencing:

- Low mood
- Anxiety or worry
- Avoidance of certain activities due to anxiety
- Simple phobias (e.g. phobias of spiders)
- Panic
- Poor sleep hygiene
- Negative thoughts
- Exam stress

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. Parents can view 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

Community Hub (Mrs Youngman)

We have continued to develop the QMGs Community Hub over the summer. The Hub is a place where we are able to safely store the pre-loved uniform and food donations and a place where students and families are able to come and pick up any requests of support. The preloved uniform has come from school community donations, and we are supported with our food donations by Balbir Seimar of the Hindu Forum, Bushra Naureen of the Ahmaddiya Muslim Women's Walsall Branch and Adil Parkar of Masjid al Falaah.

We are in a position to help if you need support for either of the above. Please complete [this form](#) and we will do our best to contact you before the end of term. If not, we will do our best to contact you during the GCSE results week, most probably 16th or 17th August. If you have any uniform that your child has grown out of that you no longer need, we would love to have it please to help continue to build our Community Hub provision.

If you have any revision books that your child no longer needs, we will also welcome these as over the next academic year we want to continue to develop this provision. Our community is important to us, and we want to be able to support as many students and families as we can. If you have any further queries, please contact Mrs Hill via d.hill@qmg.merciantrust.org.uk

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. Thank you to those members of the school community who took part in the Walsall Arboretum Parkrun event on Saturday 23rd September. I have included some plans below and more can be found out about the project [here](#). Current pledges are just under £700,000, which is a great start, but there is lots of work to do. If you would like to discuss how you can help please email our Alumni and Development Officer, Prveen Kataria-Raulia via alumni@qmgsmerciantrust.org.uk or you can make a monthly/ annual or one-off donation by following this [link](#).



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



RAAC

You may have seen recent media coverage regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and its use in educational settings. RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete; because it is weaker than regular concrete, concerns have been raised about its long-term durability. Department for Education (DfE) has recently changed its guidance to education settings on the management of RAAC to take a more precautionary approach and as a result areas in affected spaces will be vacated. We wanted to inform you that we are not affected by this decision as we do not have RAAC in any of our buildings and therefore they will continue to function as normal.

Litter and parking

I have written regularly in previous newsletters with regards to safe parking, traffic manouvers and general use of the roads around the school. I have continue to receive regualr communications from parents and local residents about this matter and urge you to please consider other members of the community. We are continuing to work with the local council and police, to ensure a presence and intervention around peak traffic times. Can I also please ask that parents are students are mindful of litter in the community, both in the school grounds and around the local area. We are a busy school, but can make a difference if everyone plays their part.

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@qmg.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](#)

Homework club

Homework club will continue to run again in the autumn term, on a Monday-Thursday. More information can be found on the School's [website](#).

Catering at QMGs

We continue to work with Innovate as our catering providers, part of the IFG group. Please see the school [website](#) for full information on the service and below for a letter from the company regarding price changes in September.



Dear Parent/Guardian

We have gained a well-deserved reputation for never compromising on quality, portion size, choice or value, which is why we are proud to be serving so many students across the country.

The challenges we're seeing in our kitchens are the same as those you're likely experiencing at home. Ingredient prices are rocketing, and energy costs are sky high. Additionally, we're funding important wage increases for our teams. Here's some background information that we would like to share with you.

Food Inflation is at 16.5%

As is the case for supermarkets and restaurants across the UK, we're seeing near weekly increases in the prices of food and drink. Supply volumes have dropped, due to factors such as the invasion of Ukraine, bird flu, swine fever and extreme weather internationally, driving prices up. We're working closely with our chefs and supply partners to introduce new products and dishes, but these mitigations have limits.

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. It is 3% higher than last year's record rise, which is great progress, but does subsequently create funding pressures.

We have absorbed some of the cost increases and continue to seek further efficiencies, however, we need to implement a **tariff increase of 6.6% from September 2023**. This is a below inflation increase, which will allow us to maintain quality services and support our catering teams. The situation is far from ideal, we would like as many students to enjoy our services as possible and we appreciate price increases make this harder, particularly when many families are feeling the effects of high interest mortgages and the general cost of living crisis. That said, we believe our food continues to offer excellent value for money.

As always, thank you for your support and understanding. We will continue to partner with schools, students and parents to explore new approaches and gain input and feedback as we navigate this challenging period. If you have any thoughts you would like to share with us, please get in touch – we'd love to hear from you.

Kindest regards

Ken Navin

Client Relationship Director

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Dates for your diary

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

Thu 28 Sep	QMA sign up evening (hall, 6.30pm)
Sat 30 Sep	QMC alumni dinner
Thu 5 Oct	Year 11 parents' evening
Thu 12 Oct	Year 13 parents' evening
Thu 26 Oct	Speech Day (finish for half term)
Mon 6 Nov	Autumn half term 2 begins (8.45am)

Final word

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

Mr Langton



Through Easy Fundraising we have raised a total of £6,154.85 for the school from 296 parent and staff supporters, with the leading supporter having single-handedly raised £755.84 towards this! 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.
- You can find our Easyfundraising page at this [link](#)

Thank you