



**PLATANOS COLLEGE**

An outstanding school for  
pupils of all abilities

# Key Stage 3 Newsletter

**Spring Term – April 2021**

*Attitude Determines Altitude*

Key Dates	
Return to school – Summer Term	Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 8.40am
May Bank Holiday	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2021
Half Term	Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2021 to Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
End of Summer Term	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021

## Welcome



As another term draws to a close, we would like to thank you, our parents and carers for the continued support that you have shown us in the Spring Term.

You have been appreciative and positive in supporting your children's learning at home. Collectively we have ensured that pupils have continued to learn and make progress online.

A big congratulations must be offered to our outstanding pupils! To say that we are impressed with how rapidly pupils managed to adapt to their live online lessons would be an understatement. Pupils have shown maturity beyond their years and have really taken ownership of their own learning.

Our focus is to ensure that pupils drive the momentum of independent learning forward – to constantly and consistently consolidate their learning,

to think critically and to have an inquisitive nature when it comes to their learning. Being an independent learner will auger well for pupils for their futures – whether it be in preparing for their GCSE or A Level examinations, university or the working world.

If you needed any evidence of how impressive our pupils have been, we would direct you to our weekly Pupil Celebration Newsletter. We sent over 5,000 certificates to pupils in the Spring Term in recognition of their hard work and progress. Something that was picked up by the South London Press!



We recognise the importance of personal development in education. We have continued to share our weekly reflection in our Assembly Notices sent out by text message and available through our school website. We have wanted pupils to reflect on themes such as consumerism, a safer

internet, Holocaust Memorial Day, and conscience. We have also wanted to share weekly notices and updates with pupils and the Assembly Notices will continue to be a useful tool in regularly communicating with our pupils.

Our focus during the Spring Term has been to reinforce our high expectations. This has included teachers continuing to provide high quality lessons, providing pupils with feedback and ensuring high standards. We continued to reach out by telephone to all parents, carers and pupils and provided technological support – all in the spirit that our pupils are our priority – they come first.

Where we are proud of the achievements of the Spring Term, we must now look ahead to the Summer Term. Our focus remains on our pupils making rapid progress academically and personally.

Our high expectations of our pupils remain. We believe that each and every pupil can achieve beyond all expectations. After all - Attitude Determines Altitude.

## Year 7 Reflections

**Why are you happy to be back in school?**

*Yosyas 7D – “It was harder to work online so I am glad I am back in school.”*

*Runayah 7E – “I am happy to be learning in school again.”*

*Geoffrey 7C – “I am happy to socialise with my friends again.”*

*Max 7C – “I am happy to be socialising with friends in school again – and just to be in school!”*

*Sharae 7W – “It is easier to communicate with others in school and the teachers are able to help you easier.”*

*Ashwagh 7A – “The teachers care about our learning and it’s fun to be back in school.”*

It is hard to believe that the Spring Term is drawing to a close and that the year 7 cohort is two thirds of the way through the academic year - their first year of secondary education. The last three months have flown by, but what a different term it has been!



I have been astounded by year 7 and their response to online learning. They have shown levels of resilience beyond their years, adjusting to significant changes to their daily routine and accessing their schoolwork online. Our pupils have shown remarkable persistence to strive for academic excellence in the midst of uncertainty, often having to overcome technological problems and find solutions to ensure that their learning continued from home.

It has been great to see the year 7 return to the school over the last few weeks. I have been so impressed with

their quick readjustment in returning to school, making it look seamless.

Whilst it has been obvious that pupils have missed interacting with their friends and teachers face to face on a daily basis, it has been great to see their passion for learning evident each day. Year 7 have made an outstanding return to school. This has been evidenced by the enormous number of merits from each tutor group and in such a short period of time.

Year 7 have continued to lead the school CHABOP leader board; they have collectively achieved over 200,000 CHABOP points.



This is a fantastic achievement that highlights the sheer number of positive outcomes being achieved on a daily basis across the year group.

I must commend the year 7 pupils who have maintained a 100% attendance and punctuality record and received zero demerits so far, this academic year. This is an immense achievement by each individual pupil and showcases the outstanding attitude they display towards their learning on a daily basis.

As this term draws to a close my focus naturally shifts onto the Summer Term. The central aim for the year 7 cohort is always to continue to build upon the

strong foundations that have been established over the course of the academic year, both in regard to academic progress and the personal development of each individual pupil.

Hopefully, COVID-19 restrictions allowing, we will see the opening of extra-curricular clubs soon, which will provide pupils with the opportunity to develop a variety of skills, personal qualities and experiences by engaging with activities that they enjoy.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the end of year formal examinations which will take place during the Summer Term and the importance of all pupils taking the examinations seriously to ensure that they are able to demonstrate the academic progress they have achieved over the course of the academic year.

The Summer Term also indicates the start of preparing the year 7 cohort for the transition into year 8. I am looking forward to supporting this transition.

I have no doubt that the year 7 cohort will once again rise to the challenge of maintaining their outstanding attitude to learning in the Summer Term.

*Mr Hobson*

### **Year 8 Reflections**

**Why are you happy to be back in school?**

*Samuel 8D – “Although teachers were able to explain online, it was harder because teachers were not able to give the help they do in the classroom. There are also less distractions in school.”*

*Javine 8W – “I can see my teachers – at a distance though(!) and it is a lot easier to ask them for help. I can understand more in school.”*

*Abdullah 8D – “My teachers are able to elaborate on a question or a certain topic that I do not easily understand.”*

*Medina 8D – “It is easier to learn in class because I am used to learning in person, not at a computer.”*



It has been an unusual term, and this was evident through the majority of the school being completed via online learning due to the national lockdown.

I would like to congratulate year 8 in the way that they adjusted to completing their lessons and work online from home.

The return to school for year 8 has been outstanding. This has been evidenced by the amount of merits achieved by each tutor group in such a short period of time.

Seeing pupils interact with teachers, their peers and engaging with their work is something that I have deeply missed. Since our pupils' return to school, it has been clear to see how much pupils enjoy being at school and creating amazing memories in their



learning journey. I look forward to seeing these relationships and memories grow over the Summer Term.

Over the Summer Term the aim for the year 8 is to continue to build upon the strong foundations that have been established over the course year 7 and this academic year both in regards to academic progress and the personal development of all pupils.

The Summer Term also indicates the start of preparing the year 8 for the transition into year 9 and options.

At the end of year 8, pupils will choose two option subjects as taster subjects for the final option process in year 9. Most of the subjects in the school are compulsory, however we offer option choices for pupils in year 9 to study subjects that they have greater interest in and to have a taster of what the subjects may be like at GCSE.

Choosing subjects does not mean that these have to be taken for your GCSE options. A formal process will take place at the end of year 9 in order to establish what option subject they will take at GCSE.

Exciting times are afoot for pupils in year 8. Along with Ms Hibbert, I look forward to working with all pupils as they consider their future pathways.

*Mr Schardsmith*

### **Year 9 Reflections**

**Why are you happy to be back in school?**

*Ridwan 9A – “I work harder at school.”*

*Alda 9H – “I like knowledge; I like to learn and I can do this in school. I am enjoying speaking to friends in person – and not just on the phone.”*

*Samuel 9H – “I get to collaborate with my friends and learn more.”*

*Nicandro 9H – “I get to see the teachers and my friends in person. I learn more as the teachers are there with me.”*

*Mary-Rose 9W – “I get more work done because of the environment at school, which is more productive.”*



It has been such a pleasure to welcome back year 9 pupils into the classroom. Year 9 did so well in attending their live online lessons and they have brought their enthusiasm for learning back with them to school.

Many year 9 pupils submitted excellent class work online and adapted really well to the change in routine of working - I have no doubt that the computing skills that were developed will be useful for their futures in what is an evolving technological world.

In what has been a challenging year, our ethos and school motto: “Attitude Determines Altitude” rings ever true.

We continue the journey to strive forward in making every effort to achieve.

I can say, is that I am immensely proud of the pupils in year 9 in their efforts and how they have risen to the challenges and adapted to the new school procedures.

Year 9 pupils have successfully engaged with a new STEM project. Pupil feedback has shown how much they have enjoyed being part of interactive lessons, working as a team and using joined-up thinking to achieve the set tasks.

The foci for the Summer Term will be on learning and making rapid progress. I am confident that, if year 9 pupils keep up the momentum of their achievements and hard work in the Spring Term, they will prepare successfully in their transition to Key Stage 4.

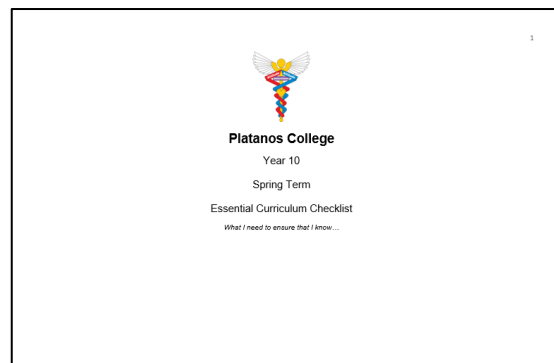
Pupils will need to consider their future pathways in the coming weeks as the school prepares them for their foundation Option subject choice. Further information regarding this process will be relayed to parents/ carers and pupils in May.



The key message from me for year 9 is that on their return to school they should always be prepared. The teaching and assessing of pupils will be on-going as we continue to ensure that every pupil makes outstanding progress.

*Mr Boyles*

## Essential Curriculum



Many parents/ carers will have read much in the news about pupil 'catch up'.

At Platanos College we have started our preparations for helping pupils fill in the gaps of any missed learning during the enforced school closure.

We have decided to compile a list of key learning topics for the Spring Term (January to April) for each subject.

This is intended to:

- Assist pupils who have missed lessons so that they can 'catch-up'
- Allow pupils to revise topics at home, using interactive learning resources.

These curriculum guides will be sent alongside this newsletter and will be made available through the school's website.

These 'Essential Curriculum' guides will help parents/ carers to support their children's learning at home. This can be done by:

- Agreeing two topics for one subject that pupils can study at home (approximately 1 hour)
- Agreeing two topics for one subject each weekend day
- Agreeing three topics for one subject per weekday in the holiday time.

Some pupils may find it useful to create a timetable to assist with their planning for studying these topics. A blank timetable is available at the end of each guide.

We hope that you will find the Essential Curriculum Guides a useful resource to support your child in achieving their target grade this academic year.

### **Teachers' reflections on online learning**

It has been important for all teachers to connect with our pupils during the most recent lockdown. I found that through the use of Google Classroom I was able to have meaningful conversations around work and progress.

I was so impressed and pleasantly surprised at how quickly pupils adapted to their online live lessons. Pupils were able to maintain and replicate our high expectations in school online. They were able to show the passion for their learning, which I was worried might be missing whilst attending a lesson in front of a computer screen. It was a pleasure to witness humour and experience the personalities of pupils, which was missed massively in the previous school closure.

A lesson that I taught on the crime of witchcraft in the Early Modern time period comes to mind. I remember two pupils trying their hardest to convince me that witchcraft was real and that I should be careful!

I also respect the resilience of my pupils who consistently attended the lessons and provided me with high standards and quality of work.



My year 7 and 8 classes also provided me with many positive experiences during the school closure. The year 8s, in particular, enjoyed their lessons on the Industrial Revolution and very much enjoyed our lesson on Oliver Twist. While looking at scenes from Oliver Twist to explore the living conditions for child factory workers during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, very few pupils could believe that children did not go to school in the Victorian period! This was quite poignant given that our pupils hadn't been inside of a classroom in two months.

Year 7 pupils enjoyed their time studying the Middle Ages in History. Many pupils were horrified at the lack of hygiene during the Middle Ages and found parallels between the Black Death and COVID-19. This helped our pupils to see the relevance of studying History in school. History provides us with a temporal understanding of how we come to live our lives.

The highlight from my experience of teaching during the school closure would have to be my year 9 lesson on the Brixton Uprisings. As a department, we create lessons that connect historical skills with our pupils' curiosity. We were fortunate enough to work with the BBC producers from

Back in time Brixton to access the archive recordings. Pupils were able to analyse and evaluate evidence - one of the most important skills in History.

Given the worldwide attention to accuracy in what we see and read in the media, I have found the discussions around historical evidence vitally important. Through studying the events of the Brixton Uprisings pupils were able to see that 'bias' can still make evidence useful because it can reveal to use the ideas and attitudes that people had at that time. I remember one pupil explaining that the evidence she was looking at 'was useful because it revealed the attitudes at the time that contributed towards the uprisings'.

I feel so proud of our pupils and how they have learned in the Spring Term. Really well done to all of you.

*Mr Garry*

The COVID-19 outbreak has thrown up many challenges for schools and teaching staff. During the most recent lockdown, the teachers at Platanos college have risen to the challenge with creativity, compassion and care.

I was positively surprised by the ability and organisational skills of some of our pupils to cope with working independently. I also noticed that pupils who were often quiet in classrooms, were more confident in answering questions and expressing opinions online. In general, I have been positively impressed by the resilience of both staff and our pupils in response to the way that we work.

Ms Ahn: "One of the positive experiences of teaching during lockdown was to see how our pupils continued to show positive attitude



towards their learning. I was really impressed by those who were engaged even during live lessons and always put a great amount of effort into their work.”

Ms Bahia: “I was really impressed with our pupils’ ability to use new online applications to support their progress. Some of the pupils even gave me tips on things such as tools on the geometry software!”

Mr Daba: “At the beginning, it was challenging to engage with as many pupils as I wanted. After building a good routine with learners online, more pupils felt confident to actively engage in lessons. Using new tools, such as additional cameras and different screens meant that the delivery of lessons became more creative. It became a good experience and productive for our pupils.”

Mr Persaud: “It was very pleasing for me to see nearly all of the pupils attending their lessons online on a regular basis. They were keen to learn and were engaged during the lessons. Their attitude was outstanding. I felt as though they were there with me in the classroom. Pupils wanted to improve their learning and were always interested in their progress and attainment.”

Mr Sintayehu: “It was great to see so many pupils embracing the challenges of online learning, pupils were inquisitive and quickly adapted to editing the work set online.”

Mr Tromba: “I have seen determination in some pupils to regularly join live online lessons and submit their work despite the challenges they were facing, such as technical difficulties or family circumstances.”



In conversations with colleagues across the school, we have all been thoroughly impressed with the resilience, talent and determination of our incredible pupils. It has meant so much to us see our pupils engaging with remote learning. We are proud of how our pupils approached the ‘new normal’ with positivity and an open mind, which has enabled them to not just adapt and survive but adapt and thrive.

*Ms Bajaj*

### **Virtual Art Gallery**

The Art department are proud to present the wonderful artwork created during lockdown. Lockdown has been a challenging time for all of us, but through it all, pupils have been hard at work creating amazing art pieces.

To celebrate the achievements of our art students this term, we have curated an interactive virtual exhibition of their work.

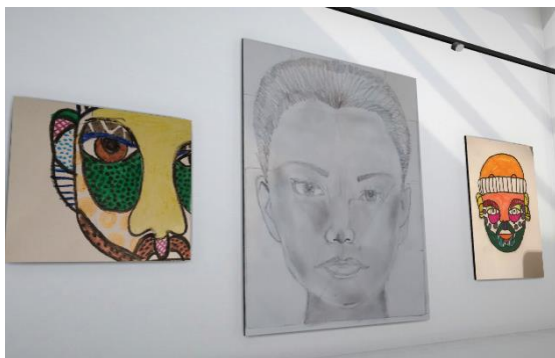
The artwork ranges from reflection photography, portraits, mixed media collages, paintings and digital drawings.



Year 9 - 11 pupils have followed schemes of work that focused on their chosen discipline, to build skills and independence for coursework. Whilst pupils in Key Stage 3 continued with their themes of Portraits and Plastic Ocean.

We hope that all pupils are as proud of their work as we are, their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

To all our pupils, well done!



*Ms Fletcher Thomas*

## The Creative Insider



PLATANOS COLLEGE  
The Art of Learning  
The Art of Living

### CREATIVE INSIDER

Issue 7 | January 2021

**Welcome**

Welcome to the first edition of your 2021 *Creative Insider*. May we take this opportunity to wish you all a belated happy new year, more specifically one that is safe, healthy and full of creativity. In our recent history, there has never been a time when imagination and ingenuity have been more vital in improving our mental health. We hope you enjoy this issue and take the opportunities provided to exercise your creative facility, crafting links and ideas in your own ways. In our current circumstances where we may often feel less in control, the act of creating itself forges new worlds controlled by the artist.

**Why Create?**

Scientist Albert Einstein told us that creativity is 'intelligence having fun.' Novelist Maya Angelou encouraged us by adding that, 'The more you use it, the more you have it.' It is central how we develop and convey our identity and a powerfully effective way of communication.

Advertising tycoon David Ogilvy, also known as 'the father of advertising,' observed, 'If it doesn't sell, it isn't creative,' showing us that from a business perspective, creative skills are absolutely vital.

Creativity can provoke your fear but writer Elizabeth Gilbert describes perfectionism as, 'The murderer of all things good.' Alongside our learning of 'how to get things right', we also need to be comfortable in getting things wrong, in taking risks and experimenting in a way that can sometimes feel more difficult as we get older. By exercising your creativity more regularly as a younger person, you will be more likely to maintain and flourish in your creative endeavours later on in life, both in the



Over the past twelve months, the *Creative Insider* has been helping our pupils stay focused and inspired. From laying down the gauntlet in providing practical art challenges to highlighting opportunities for the free streaming of plays, musicals, operas and ballets, the magazine has provided alternative resources to replace those we would usually have access to outside of lockdown.

Theatres may still be closed but the network of creative communities across London and beyond continue to produce art for our enjoyment and therapy. Few can remember a time when imagination and ingenuity have been more vital in improving our mental health, so each edition has sought to promote mindfulness and healing through creative means.

Platforms such as *The Social Distancing Festival* provide powerful artistic responses to the difficulties of lockdown and the pandemic, which our pupils can view and process before sharing their own creative reactions.

With its finger on the pulse, the *Creative Insider* has continued to draw pupils' attention to the many

opportunities our young people are afforded by living so close to the epicentre of many of our creative industries, with radio plays produced by our local theatres, public art installations and Southbank photography exhibitions being easily within walking distance to add some much-needed colour to our daily exercise.

Finally, spring has arrived and with it a renewed sense of hope for the eventual reopening of live theatres. This is longed for by so many, but with the timeline for the roadmap being impossible to guarantee, if delays continue, the *Creative Insider* will continue as an outlet that will be able to offer some of the passion and joy longed for from live performance experiences.

*Ms Valmarana*

### PE online

The PE department relished the opportunity to ensure that pupils remained physically active as best possible. The importance of mental and physical wellbeing remained at the forefront of our planning and the majority of pupils embraced the new challenge.

Pupils engaged in a variety of home workouts to maintain their fitness levels, participated in challenges which replicated sporting skills such as throwing a teabag into a cup to work on their accuracy, a skill needed in a variety of sports-along with other adapted challenges.

Pupils were able to explore the different pathways associated with PE and to demonstrate their versatility

through a range of tasks. Pupils also completed numerous quizzes and spelling tests to maintain and extend their knowledge of sport specific vocabulary. Alongside this, they were tasked with analysing aspects of sports through videos including highlighting tactics, observing rules and discussing strengths and weaknesses of players.

The online platform also created an opportunity for pupils to sustain a good pupil-teacher relationship throughout the lockdown; this also allowed pupils to express any concerns and or ask for fitness advice. Pupils also shared exciting news regarding their individual fitness journey which was very encouraging to see.

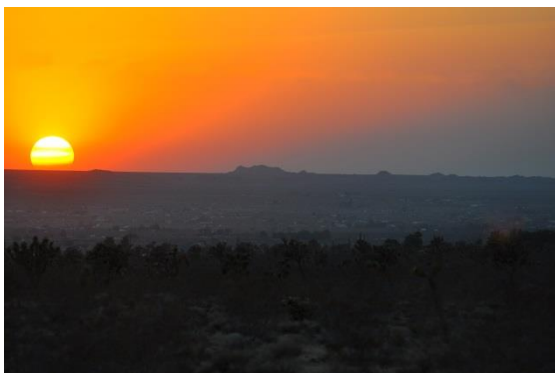
In order to acknowledge all their hard work, pupils were celebrated on a weekly basis. We congratulate our pupils on their engagement with the online tasks and look forward to continuing the learning at school.

Below are pictures of some of our pupils engaging in their home workout! Great work!





### Pupil Anthology



Last year, our pupils across Key Stages 3 and 4 demonstrated their outstanding creative writing skills through a number of publications.

Who could forget the truly heart-warming, honest accounts of life

during Coronavirus in last year's Life in Lockdown anthology? We were all amazed at the phenomenal range of creative writing pieces, depicting our pupils' thoughts, feelings and hopes during the challenges of 2020.

This year, our pupils are being given a number of opportunities to write for yet another school anthology, this time to be published at the end of the academic year.

So far, pupils across Years 7 to 11 have submitted interesting and thought-provoking pieces on the theme of Dreams and Nightmares. KS3 pupils took part in a lesson based on the theme of Dreams and Nightmares, studying 2 poems and art works before being challenged to create their own original pieces; some chose to write a short story, whilst others created their own poems.

Many pupils challenged themselves to complete the deceptively tricky task of summarising their thoughts into a 6 word story.

Over the Easter holidays, our pupils across all year groups are being given yet another opportunity to have their work published - this time, the challenge is to write a creative piece on 1 of 3 opening lines or an image.

All pupils should see the guidelines on Show My Homework for the full details of what they need to do. We want all Platanos College pupils to have the chance to have at least one piece of work published at the end of the year; we can't wait to read more of their exciting, thought-provoking and insightful writing!

*Ms Thompson*



## Virtual Parent Workshops

At Platanos College, we recognise that working in partnership with our parents/carers is vital in supporting the educational and social development of all of our pupils.

Since December 2020, the school's Educational Psychologist and two Assistant Psychologists have been running fortnightly parental workshops.

We recognise that the national lockdowns have been difficult for all in our school community and as a result, the workshops have focused on topics that support pupils' well-being and home learning. during this difficult time.

The topics covered in the workshops has been determined by parent voice and we have covered the following topics to date:

- How to develop your child's study skills
- How to manage behaviour as a parent
- How to support your child with home learning
- 8 ways to motivate your child
- How to support your child's wellbeing at home

The workshops have had some excellent feedback. The highlights of the workshops have been:

- *Interaction with other parents*
- *The variety of topics covered*
- *The information around teen brain development*
- *Picking up techniques from other parents in the breakout rooms*
- *Everyone sharing their opinions, and I got good suggestions*

The workshops will continue throughout the summer term and will continue to offer parents/carers strategies on areas that have been identified as topics of interest to parents/carers. Future topics include:

- Supporting your child with future planning
- Supporting your child to develop their reading comprehension skills
- Supporting your child to develop their numeracy skills
- The power of using growth mindset at home to support your child's learning
- How to build your child's self-esteem and resilience
- Top tips to prevent and manage your child's anxiety

If you are interested in attending a parental workshop or have any questions, please send an e-mail to [info@platanoscollege.com](mailto:info@platanoscollege.com).

Ms Henry

## Creative Careers Week

The Careers National Creative Week took place between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The aim of the Creative Careers Week 2021 was to give pupils an opportunity to gain an insight into the range of roles that exist across the creative industries.

Platanos College participated in an online careers programme introducing pupils to different careers and workplaces across the creative

industries such as Gaming, Animation, Textiles, Crafts and Fashion.

Pupils across years 7, 8 and 9 were involved in virtual workshops, Zoom Q&A sessions with professionals from the creative industries and interactive sessions.

Well done to all of our pupils who participated.

### Armitage Juniors Programme

Ten year 8 pupils have recently joined the Armitage Juniors Programme.

Pupils will attend twelve online sessions in total featuring a mixture of fun, practical, and theory based training that focuses on:

- Developing communication skills
- Medical ethics
- Respiration
- Radiology
- Cardiology
- And practical advice on next steps.

There will be an opportunity for pupils to continue the programme later in their school career (up to A Level) following successful completion of this programme.

All sessions are delivered by ambassadors from King's College London. We look forward to seeing how our potential future medical professionals fare in the coming months!

### Uniform

Please ensure that your child has the correct uniform for their return to school. **This includes hair cuts which should be of a straight forward style – natural colour without lines or patterns. Lines cut into eyebrows are not allowed.**

- Boys are not permitted to wear earrings. Girls are permitted to wear a small stud in the lobe of each ear. **No other piercings are permitted.**
- Uniform includes: school blazer, school tie in house colours, formal white collar shirt, grey or black trousers (not denim), black or grey skirt for girls, black or grey socks, school shoes (not boots/ canvas shoes/ trainer style shoes).
- Hair colour must be natural
- For girls who wear a hijab this must be only plain dark blue, plain black, plain white or plain grey.

**Pupils who return to school in April with breaches of school uniform will be sent home until this is corrected.**

### Update to Contact Details

Please ensure the school office has all your current contact details, especially your current mobile phone number and email address and advise us immediately if any of these change. If there are any changes, please let us know by informing the main office as soon as possible or email [info@platanoscollege.com](mailto:info@platanoscollege.com)

## Twitter

We are on Twitter! If you want to see our latest successes as they happen follow us @platanoscollege.

#attitudedeterminesaltitude