



Friday 15th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please find included in this week's update some brief notices, and information about our current position as we attempt to make sense of government guidance and plan for face-to-face contact with some of our students before the summer break.

Mr Burns, Assistant Headteacher (Engagement & Wellbeing), is launching a competition with our students in main school to propose names for our form groups. These names could be flowers, famous sports stars, local famous people, landmarks... the choice is theirs. The idea is to create a vertical identity through the school so we can group students with different year groups for key events such as Sports Day and other competitive occasions. Our return to year group forms last September has been really successful, but the staff wish to reinstate a parallel House structure to enhance collaboration and interaction beyond the classroom. Please encourage your son or daughter to take part in this exciting opportunity to shape their school.

Don't forget that if your son or daughter is in Y11 and planning to study A-Levels with us next year, they are missing a golden opportunity to make a head start on their learning if they haven't signed up to the A-Level bridging classrooms. If you are having any difficulties or want further help and support, do not hesitate to contact Mr Weedy, Assistant Headteacher (Sixth Form & Progression), via sixthform@stokesleyschool.org.

Following requests from several of our parents and carers, please find attached to this letter a document with tips for reducing anxiety recommended by Mrs McGreal, Assistant Headteacher (SEND and Inclusion). Also, please remember we have trained staff who can help, even remotely, so do get in touch if you need us.

If your son or daughter is in Y8 and hasn't chosen his or her personalised options yet, please ensure he or she does so as soon as possible. Students need to register first via an email already sent. As soon as we receive all of the choices, we can confirm back to you and the students and proceed with the complex task of timetabling for next year! Again, if you have any problems, please notify Mr McGreal, Assistant Headteacher (Data & Curriculum), r.mcgregal@stokesleyschool.org or if you haven't had the link, you should contact admin@stokesleyschool.org.

Finally, I would like to address the latest updates from the government following the Prime Minister's address on Sunday. For many people and professions there are significant hurdles to overcome in plotting a course back to work; I have particular empathy for my primary colleagues who have the weight of a more immediate national expectation upon them.

You received a letter from our CEO this week which highlighted specific elements of the government guidance related to secondary schools in terms of 'some support to supplement pupils' remote education', but not a 'full timetable'. You are also aware that the focus has been placed upon those year groups who are taking public exams in 2021, which means a return to school before September will not happen for students in year groups 7, 8 and 9 (other than those who are vulnerable, or children of key workers). We are, of course, saddened by this: we

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are desperate to see our students again and begin to return to a glimmer of normality. On the other hand, we recognise that bringing back all 1150 students and 140 staff at this stage would

be a monumental challenge that is not conducive to current social distancing guidelines. So, for these year groups, we will continue to work as we have been doing and remain receptive to any contact from parents and carers if you feel there is something that needs to change or improve to suit your personal circumstances.

For Y10 and Y12, having only received government guidance late on Monday evening and continued updates over the last few days, we are still very much in the planning phase across our multi-academy trust. Some of the questions we are asking are:

- How should we best interpret the guidance in terms of 'some' contact to 'supplement...remote learning' to ensure this of benefit to our students?
- How can we ensure a good standard of distance learning is maintained for all students if staff are being called into school to have contact with Y10 and Y12?
- How can we ensure as much social distancing as possible in our small 1960s classrooms and corridors?
- How can we provide meaningful contact taking into account the number of staff who will still be unable to physically return to school for a variety of reasons, such as childcare and/or health vulnerability?
- What will the impact of transport requirements be in terms of getting young people safely to and from school, particularly if an altered timetable is followed?
- How can we be absolutely certain, as trained teachers and not epidemiologists or virologists, that we are doing all we can to put the safety of staff and students at the heart of these important next steps?

There are many more questions too. We will find the answers to these questions and cautiously forge a way forward with positivity and enthusiasm; however, thank you for understanding that the road ahead is complex and will take a little time to navigate. Whatever we do will be designed to minimise the risks to the very best of our ability.

As Mrs Brooker indicated in her letter, I will contact Y10 and Y12 parents directly with our next steps as soon as I am able; in the meantime, we will continue with our remote learning plan.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher

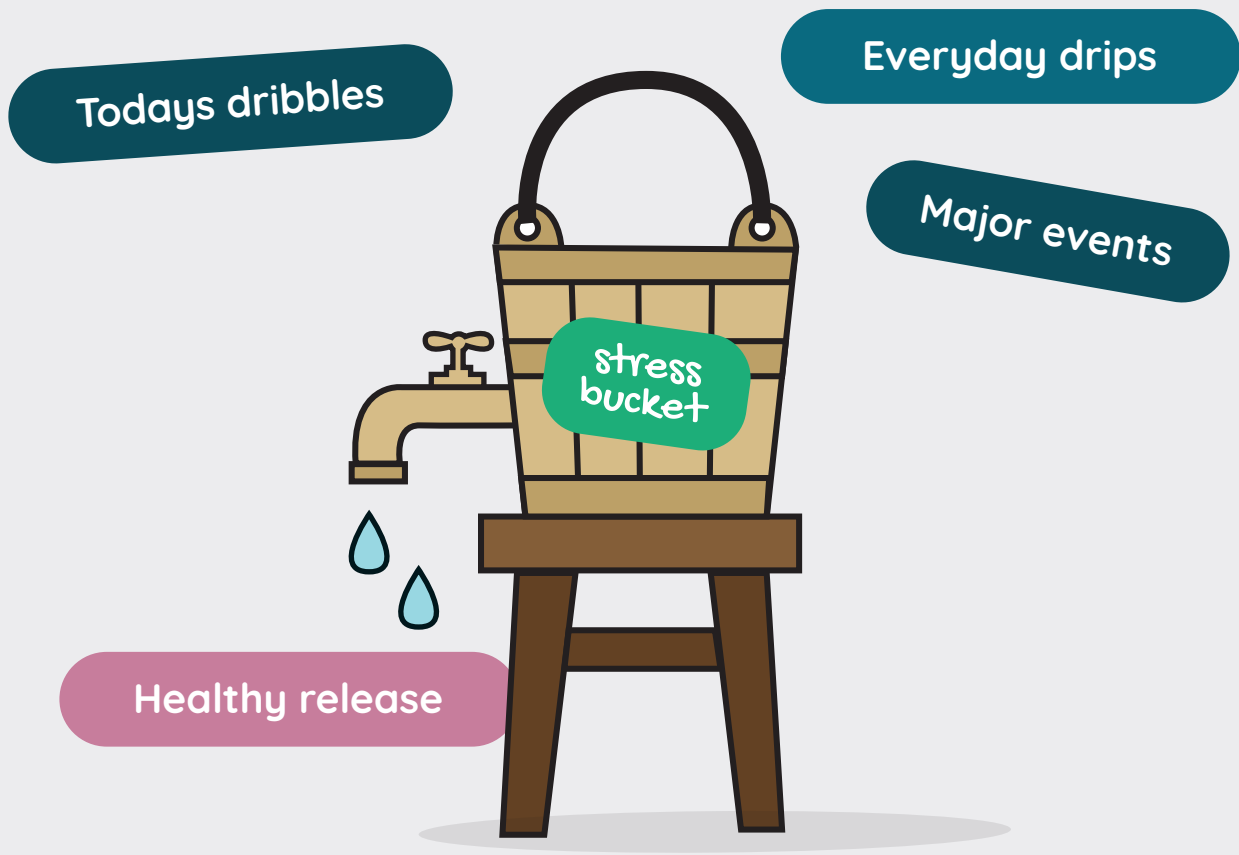


Reducing

Anxiety

Again, and again we hear that we are living in an extraordinary – unprecedented – uncertain period of time. They are not wrong! This is unique in world events.

Give yourself a break and celebrate what we have that makes us feel secure.



Everybody's capacity for stress is different – **How big is your bucket?**

For

Children

- Try using a worry box
- Allow contact with friends and family using safe methods
- Enjoy time together. Maybe watch a film, play a game, do a puzzle, read to them or read together
- Be honest about the situation in a factual way
- Learn what soothes them. This might include any sensory needs
- Take exercise
- Learn new skills alongside them. Or, teach them one of your skills, e.g. cooking, crafts, art, gardening, or games
- Be prepared for them being clingy, complaining of aches and pains, tantrums, disturbed nights, etc. Such behaviours are likely to happen
- Keep routines such as mealtimes and bedtimes

For

Grown ups

- Focus on what you CAN change
- Acknowledge your own feelings
- Come back into your body (notice your limbs, breathing)
- Engage with your surroundings and senses
- Show yourself that you can have fun. Be silly, jokey, or maybe sing or dance!
- Plan your days
- Keep calm and avoid too much 'Corona' talk, news or social media, especially in front of younger people
- Look for low cost or no-cost activities and try to make things playful rather than being a chore
- Sort or organise toys, food, or clothes
- Be good to yourself. Listen to music, watch a box-set and avoid a rise in alcohol or drug use

For

Teenagers

- Give them space
- Give them privacy
- Allow contact with friends and family using safe methods
- Try relaxing the rules and give them some leeway
- Keep the offer of communication open
- Allow communication to happen naturally, when they are ready and avoid trying to force it
- Keep routines such as mealtimes and bedtimes
- Be honest about the situation in a factual way
- Offer a family meeting to discuss concerns and to plan positive, family activities
- Be prepared for big emotions as they are highly likely
- Learn what soothes them. This might include sensory needs
- Record a vlog or make a time capsule (it could be historic!)
- Take exercise

Finally

Remember

You are not qualified teachers (unless you are LOL) and any learning or other activities you can support is BRILLIANT. Home is different from school, it often offers a more secure, less emotionally arousing place.

So, try to allow yourself and your family to enjoy it.