



Friday, 1st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you well as we reach the end of another week of school closures and lockdown.

All staff are acutely aware of how difficult it can be to manage the motivation, workload and learning of some of our children given the current circumstances. One way staff are prioritising motivation is through the continued awarding of 'ambition' points. Under normal circumstances, staff award between 600 and 700 points a week across the 5 year groups, 7-11, but in the last two weeks the average has grown to almost 1400 ambition points per week! Most parents have downloaded the school's parent app and will be receiving notifications of these deserved rewards; if you don't already use the app, then please download it so that you can keep track of the positive recognition given during lockdown and beyond. If any of you are experiencing difficulties with the app or cannot download it, please contact admin@stokesleyschool.org for help.

Despite lockdown, normal school planning is still going on in the background. Y9 parents / carers will shortly be receiving a letter confirming option choices, if you haven't already. If you need to choose another option for any reason, or have any queries about the listed choices, please email Mr McGreal, Assistant Headteacher, as soon as possible and ideally by Monday at the latest. Mr McGreal's address is r.mcgreal@stokesleyschool.org.

Y8 are next to choose personalised options as they prepare to move into Y9. To help the students (and you) make informed choices remotely, we will be sharing videos explaining each course and providing more information on how to complete the options process. This is an exciting time for Y8 as they begin to shape the curriculum to their personal interests and strengths.

Please keep letting us know if there are any issues or concerns with remote learning so we can make any required adjustments relevant to your son or daughter. We are aware that sometimes it can be frustrating for students when they do not receive feedback on every single piece of work they submit to their teacher. The daily feedback teachers give verbally during lessons is something that, regrettably, simply cannot be exactly replicated in the current climate. To put this in context for you and hopefully demonstrate why more is not always possible, a typical member of staff teaches somewhere between 6 and 15 classes depending on the subject; some teach as many as 25. Taking 10 classes to be a rough average, this represents around 250 students, which is a minimum of 250 pieces of work set each week and a potential 250 emails/submissions from students to work through each week. For some staff it could easily be double this amount. Furthermore, if staff give extensions to deadlines for students for all the right reasons, this then means they are monitoring their standard workload as well as looking out for late submissions. All this with many also supervising learning or child care for their own families. Please don't read this as excuses: this is our job and we want to do it well giving every student the attention they deserve; so, to try and make up for the contact that staff would normally have with students between standard assessment points (usually every 6-12 hours of learning), we are issuing ambition points, sending lots of emails, making positive 'phone calls home and doing 'shout outs' on the student broadcast. We hope this goes some way to helping students still feel in regular contact with their school and teachers. We also want to remind you not to worry too much if you are struggling to ensure your son or daughter manages all of their work on top of all of your other competing demands: we know how hard it is and will catch them up as soon as we can.

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Our Special Educational Needs Coordinator and Assistant Headteacher, Mrs McGreal, would like to draw parents' attention to a free webinar. It is aimed at parents of dyslexic children, but might be of interest to all parents if they are struggling with anxiety and expectations with regards to home learning. You can access the webinar via this link: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/events/free-webinar-for-parents-managing-you-and-your-childs-wellbeing-being-realistic-and-human-and-not-super-human-1>.

This half term is usually peak recruitment season in schools, and we continue to appoint staff despite the current social distancing measures. This week, via the power of the internet, we interviewed and appointed a new Head of English who will join us from September. The candidates were even able to teach a lesson - albeit remotely and to a group of English teachers rather than our students! We are also recruiting a Head of Physics this week and an additional member of our pastoral support staff (the Ethos Team) next week.

A reminder for Y12: UCAS search options for courses beginning 2021 are due to go live on May 5th; registering to the website so that you can fill in your details and begin applying won't be available until 19th May. For Y13's information, universities are being slower than usual in making decisions for offers, so do not panic if you have not heard back from all of your choices yet. The universities have until the 4th June to make decisions, and students will then need to respond to any correspondence by 18th June.

We have started to plan transition to secondary school for Y6 students in earnest. With uncertainty about when schools might reopen, this has involved at least a plan A, B or C! If you have a child joining us in September, rest assured we will not let social distancing stop us from helping our youngest students to feel part of our community and ready to start with us when the time is right. If you know a family who have a child joining Stokesley School and Sixth Form College for the first time, please encourage them to visit our website (*about us > transition to Y7*) and to follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with transition developments. We are also in the process of reaching out to these parents directly to collate contact details. If schools remain shut, we may well be approaching some of our older students to record messages of support and wisdom to pass on to our new recruits - watch this space!

Finally, as you know, next Friday is a bank holiday and staff will not be setting work on these days so everyone can take a break. If you fit the government criteria and would like us to open to care for your son or daughter, please let us know as soon as possible so we can make the necessary arrangements.

We wish you well for the week ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs H. L. Millett,
Headteacher

