



Friday 27th November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to your fortnightly update letter which has information on: students' Christmas dinners; Christmas jumper day; how we act when students need to self-isolate; remote learning when students are isolating; supporting students' mental health and special educational needs; the LIFE curriculum; social media usage; community connections/Operation Encompass; anti-bullying week; and, sixth formers' university applications. The letter is jam-packed this week, but remember the headings are there to help you pick the parts that are most relevant or interesting to you!

Christmas dinner

One of the highlights of our year is the students' Christmas dinner which is usually served for 3 days in the final week of term. It is popular with students, and members of the senior team and support staff enjoy joining the catering team to dish up the sprouts and more to our eager customers. Unfortunately, our current arrangements at lunchtime will make it difficult to do Christmas dinner in the same way, so we have decided to have a festive Wednesday every week in December. Christmas dinner will be served every Wednesday for 3 weeks; this means our lucky Y7s will have 3 opportunities to enjoy the delights, but every year group will get their chance to indulge at least once.

Christmas jumper day

Our students and staff are looking forward to Friday 11th December: our annual Christmas Jumper Day. For parents who are new to the school, we have worn Christmas Jumpers on the penultimate Friday of term for several years. Save the Children supports Christmas Jumper day nationally; this year with charities struggling and children living in poverty rising, it seems more appropriate than ever that we support this charity. We ask that students donate £1 to exchange their blazer for a Christmas Jumper, the rest of their school uniform remains compulsory. We look forward to judging and awarding prizes to the best individual jumpers in each year group and the tutor groups who demonstrate the best effort. Please note, you should not rush out and buy a Christmas jumper if your son or daughter doesn't have one: festive adaptations to an existing jumper are perfectly acceptable (and lots of fun to make and judge)!





A reminder regarding school procedures when we have to ask students to self-isolate

Last week was a challenging week for us as a school; having experienced relatively few student coronavirus cases we had an influx all in one go. Regrettably, the Y11s were hit hardest just as we embarked upon mock examinations. As a reminder, the process we undertake when we learn about a case is as follows:

- establish with the family where the case is likely to have originated;
- work with the family to establish close contacts during travel to and from school and during social times in school;
- trace the students' timetable back 48 hours before symptoms began, or when the positive test took place if there were no symptoms;
- access our central database of digital seating plans to establish close contacts;
- measure the classrooms occupied during the identified period to see which students have been within 2m of the infected person for 15 minutes or more;
- cross reference all of the seating plans and class lists to establish a definitive list of students to self-isolate;
- contact staff and ask them to read out a standard message to students to allay any fears while they wait to find out if they are going home;
- send a text message and email to parents to collect their child from school as soon as possible (unless they are old enough to travel independently such as the students in our sixth form).

All of these steps are carried out with advice from the Local Health Protection Team, and Public Health England if necessary. It is not an understatement to say we are devastated when we have to send students home, but try to make the process as smooth as possible and limit the number of isolating students as much as we can whilst keeping everyone's safety a priority.

Updates regarding remote learning

Our live lessons for isolating students have started really well, we've had a lot of students engaged with lessons whilst having to work from home which is great to see! We would like to remind you that these lessons are only for students who are self-isolating for covid reasons and are well but cannot come into school. If a student is absent for another illness, they are clearly not well enough to join a lesson. Once they are well enough, they are expected to return directly to school.

During the live lessons, it is at the teacher's discretion whether students have their camera on or off, depending on the nature of what they are doing. If a student does have their camera on, google now has the feature where you can blur the background rather than having others seeing into your home. It's also worth reminding you that the lessons are for students only: we have had one or two parents joining in which can be rather distracting for the teachers.





If you experience any difficulties accessing the lessons due to a lack of technology or technical difficulties then please get in touch so we can help. If you do not wish your son/daughter to join the live lessons then please email admin@stokesleyschool.org so we can let teachers know. Remember, all work is also available in google classroom, but being part of the live lesson means that the teachers can provide students with clear explanations of any new content.

Supporting students' mental health and special educational needs

The uncertainty of the pandemic has certainly hit some of our young people hard: you will have seen this reported in the news and Stokesley School is no exception. Over the course of this term, our Ethos and SEN (Special Educational Needs) teams have been supporting the students who have been referred to us by the year group tutor teams. This support includes work in tutor time to help small groups of students to start their day off with a positive frame of mind; supporting Y7 students with transition; and working with groups of students on mindfulness and building self esteem as well as supporting with homework.

The Ethos and SEN teams are proud of the resilience our students have demonstrated in this most unusual of terms. Any of our students can access support by raising concerns and worries with their form tutor or another trusted adult, or by using the 'I'm worried' button on the student dashboard.

The LIFE curriculum

Mrs Fox wrote to you in September about our exciting new LIFE curriculum: discussion-based lessons delivered through tutor time which cover the government's statutory relationships and sex education framework, as well as careers education. We took the opportunity to use these LIFE lessons in the first term to help to support our students with their return to school after lockdown. Students in the main school and sixth form have talked - with their tutor and peers - about the importance of hope, gratitude, happiness, resilience, and the school community and have had opportunities to think about how these concepts play a significant role in their day-to-day lives both in and out of school. This half term has also seen the launch of the weekly LIFE bulletin, which gives students opportunities to explore topics such as careers, the news and world events in more depth, pointing them in the direction of things that are relevant to them and to the lives that they lead. The LIFE bulletin is shared with students weekly on the student dashboard, and can also be accessed - as can backdated copies - via the school website under 'News'.



Social Media

Social media plays a part in all of our lives. Children can feel huge pressure to be liked, say the right thing, and have a following. This can of course create more harm than good. Unfortunately, some of our students have experienced the negative side of social media during this most recent lockdown, being bombarded with messages and questions from other students about their Covid health. More widely, as a school, we regularly encounter issues caused outside of school by social media: students posting comments or images that are unkind, hurtful or simply thoughtless. As it is coming up to Christmas, it seems the perfect time to remind our young people and those we care for to be nice to others and as adults to ensure that what our children are doing on their smartphones is appropriate and safe. Mrs Myers, Designated Safeguarding Lead, sends home regular newsletters about online safety which can help parents navigate the complex online world that is such a significant part of our students' lives.

Community connections and 'operation encompass'

Trust between the local police and the public is essential within any community and we feel it is important that we do our part to support this process and to help make our students feel safe.

Over the coming months we will be working regularly with the neighborhood PCSOs and School Community Police Officers on various projects within school to build relationships and raise awareness around different subjects.

Another part of our work with police is Operation Encompass. This is an initiative that enhances communication between the police and schools where a child is at risk from - or has experienced - domestic abuse. The purpose of the information sharing is to ensure schools can enhance their safeguarding of children: by knowing that the child has had this experience, the school is in a better position to understand and be supportive of the child's needs and possible behaviours. Operation Encompass will complement existing safeguarding procedures. Schools are normally informed via email the following day after an incident has happened to allow them to support the child and families.

Anti-Bullying Week

The week commencing Monday 16th November 2020 was National Anti-Bullying Week and what a week we had!. Our Year 9 Anti-Bullying Ambassadors planned and organised a full week of tutor time activities: they recorded an introduction assembly that was shared with the whole school where they set out their vision for change; they spoke about their rewrite of the school's anti-bullying policy that was shared with parents earlier this year; they created lively class discussions about what it means to be an 'upstander' rather than a bystander; they promoted reflection on the impact of our thoughts, words and actions; and they went on a recruitment drive in Y8 for new anti-bullying ambassadors where they . and passionately spoke about that change beginning with acceptance and kindness. Finally, on Friday, they





launched our Christmas Kindness Campaign, in conjunction with Ben and Holly (Head Boy and Girl) and the Student Leaders. Alongside the food bank collection which we informed you about in the last parent letter, students will be putting together Christmas hampers for identified families within the local community and surrounding areas. We are immensely proud of all our students and the commitment they have made to making a difference for others.

Sixth form - Y13 university applications

Currently, one-third of our Y13 students have successfully completed and sent off their UCAS applications to a multitude of different universities around the country, many of them already receiving offers. This period of time can be nerve-wracking for our students, but it is also incredibly exciting. Interacting with the Y13s and seeing them take a step closer towards their goals has been one of the highlights of the year so far. Some of these courses will require interviews, highly likely to take place via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet. We have already carried out a number of mock interviews with our students this half term; should any of our other Y13s like to experience this valuable practice run, they simply need to contact their tutor or Mr Weedy for more information. We have a plethora of adults with a wide range of experience ready and willing to help out.

For those students who have not yet completed their UCAS applications, this is a reminder that the official deadline is January 15th 2021. This might seem a long way off, but is only five school weeks away. Tutors are working tirelessly to ensure every personal statement is of high quality, but they can only work with statements that are close to completion. Once next week's Y13 mocks are over, our Y13s need to make every effort to get their UCAS applications completed before the Christmas break.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher