



Friday 5th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the headteacher's fortnightly update which has information regarding: the eco-schools award; ambition points and engagement; the SIMS parent app; assembly next week; Wellbeing Wednesday and LIFE; a final call for sixth form applications; reminders about Y9 parents' evening and Y11/Y13 information sent separately; and, students proposed return to school.

Eco-Schools Award

We have now officially signed up to work towards the Eco-Schools Award. The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning. We will be working through the stages to eventually achieve Green Flag status. This has to be tackled in steps, the first being the bronze level. The student green group is in the process of setting up an official eco-committee as part of this, along with a digital notice board so we can communicate with the whole school throughout the process.

Ambition Points and Engagement

We recognise the difficulty of staying motivated when students and many staff are working remotely. In addition to the informal engagement that happens every day such as discussions ranging from the latest topical news to what we ate on Sunday, Stokesley school staff have made a concerted effort to use formal recognition in the shape of ambition points. During the first four weeks of the half term 17,366 ambition points have been awarded, in context, that is almost 3,000 more than the last four weeks of the previous half term.

We are very proud of our students who are also maintaining excellent attendance: we are now up to 91.4% of all lessons attended, and 98% of students are attending a minimum of 2 lessons per day. We know this is not perfect, but it is a great effort on the part of everyone involved - parents included.

SIMS Parent App

You can keep track of ambition points through the SIMS parent app. We are aware that a few parents are having some issues accessing the app at the moment, getting an error message saying "failure to load user profile". We have raised this with Capita, the company behind SIMS, and have been informed that this is a national issue that they are trying to resolve. In the meantime if you do have any problems accessing the app please let us know by emailing admin@stokesleyschool.org. If you do not have a login and would like one you can also use this email address to request a new invitation is sent out. The app is set up to automatically





notify you about any ambition or behaviour points students have been awarded each day, as long as you have notifications turned on on your phone. You can also use it to view your son/daughter's school reports, timetable and update any contact details.

Assembly Next Week

We have not been holding assemblies whilst students have been learning remotely; instead, we have preferred to prioritise time with the tutor first thing in the morning as a means of checking up on the wellbeing of our students. Next week though, and to mark the end of the half term, I will be circulating an assembly to all students via their Heads of Year. The assembly is entitled 'Reasons to be Cheerful' (cue a song anyone?!) which focuses on a positive look to the future by showcasing changes to our school site that are either complete or underway such as the new Sports Hall, the refurbished Sixth Form block, and our new reception. It also aims to counteract some of the negative press coverage that is circulating at the moment that can be damaging for our young people. It is imperative that we challenge headlines that label our children 'the covid generation' and lead them to believe they have lost everything and gained nothing. They are not 'miles behind' because everyone is in the same boat, and while they may not have had a normal childhood and normal education for a while - and have, undoubtedly, faced many challenges, they have also gained new skills and had new experiences that all have the potential to shape them positively for the future.

Wellbeing Wednesday and LIFE

This is just a reminder that virtual lessons will cease at the end of period three on Wednesday 10th February to give students a well-earned break from the screen. For those of you worried about your son/daughter missing lessons, please be assured that we will not repeat this on the same day of the week in the near future, and hopefully schools will be back in session properly before we feel the need to do it again at all.

The LIFE curriculum continues to be an integral part of our education offer during lockdown, and we have been incredibly impressed with students' engagement in these tutor time sessions across all year groups. Tuesday 9th February is Safer Internet Day, and as an addition to the usual LIFE curriculum Mrs Metcalfe, Head of Y7, has produced a LIFE special for students, helping them to explore the concept of reliability in the online world.

As promised, we have also produced a special edition of the weekly LIFE bulletin for our Wellbeing Wednesday afternoon mentioned above; it is jam-packed full of suggestions for screen-free activities. Whilst there's no obligation for students to do anything from the bulletin - it is of course an afternoon away from the screen - we strongly recommend that they have a look at what's on there to get some inspiration! We've thoroughly enjoyed putting the bulletin together, and have had particular fun asking staff for their favourite songs for the Stokesley Staff Playlist! Maybe you would like to listen too? There's also an





opportunity for students to take part in our Wellbeing Wednesday competition, and we're really looking forward to seeing any entries that come our way. The bulletin is attached alongside this letter for your information.

Sixth Form Applications - Final Call!

We have now received over 70 applications to join our sixth form next year, which is the same number of students who are already in Y12 or Y13. This is an incredible figure at this stage, and I couldn't be more pleased that we have so many students who are considering staying with the teachers who already know them so well.

What is even more astounding is the fact that the recent questionnaire sent out to all Y11 students indicates we have ***even more*** students who are wanting to join us next year - a greater number than our current Y12 or Y13 cohort. This leaves us with a very nice problem: can we fit all of these students in!? You will be assured to know that we do have enough space to house 100 students in a year group here at Stokesley Sixth Form, but we are getting close to that number now (according to our questionnaire). Please can I ask you to remind your son/daughter to hand in their application form if they are interested. This needs to be done no later than **Friday 12th February**. With such an unprecedented number of students applying, I would hate to see someone miss out due to leaving it too long to hand in their form, which can be found by following the link explorestokesleysixth.org.

It is incredibly important we receive these applications so that we can move on towards the next stage: supportive interviews. These are not 'pass or fail' interviews, but a way for lead teachers here at Stokesley School to pass on advice and support to our Y11 students. Please remember that we do not 'accept' students into sixth form until they have received their results, as some subjects have specific entry requirements. These interviews can help clear up any questions that your son/daughter may have moving forward, and give them some useful targets to aim for.

Finally - on a separate and exciting note - we had a number of students take part in a sociology A-level taster lesson this week. It went down an absolute treat, and we hope to carry out more taster lessons like this in the coming weeks and months. Watch this space!

Reminder: Y9 Parents' Evening

Following the success of Y11 and Y13's virtual parents' evenings, Y9's is due to take place on Tuesday 9th February from 3:30-6:30pm. Mrs Darbyshire wrote to you two weeks ago with details of how to log on and book your appointments. It is not too late to book appointments and should you need any support, please email admin@stokesleyschool.org and our fantastic support team will be in touch to assist you.





Reminder: Y11 and Y13 Information

Mrs Darbyshire sent a separate letter to Y11 and Y13 parents yesterday with information about intervention sessions, revision tips, mental health support and a number of other matters. Please make sure you have read this letter and contact Mrs Darbyshire directly if you have any questions.

Students returning to school

There are a further two weeks of remote learning scheduled for after half term; the Prime Minister then hopes to begin the phased return of students to face-to-face teaching from 8th March onwards. What this phasing will look like in practice, nobody knows at this stage; it is also still up in the air whether students will need to be tested for coronavirus by the school upon their return. If this is the case, you will have the opportunity to provide or decline consent and we will need that army of volunteers. I will, of course, keep you up to date with any developments as and when I know more myself. Returning to face-to-face education for all must be executed in a safe and timely manner, but we all can't wait to see our students in person again and get back to something closer to normality.

This is the last fortnightly update letter of this half term; so I would like to wish you well for the break when it arrives next week.

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher

