



**Friday 26th March 2021**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the Headteacher's update for the final time this term. Spring has certainly sprung and the longer days are helping contribute to an air of optimism for us all. This letter is full of updates that include: our participation in the National Day of Reflection; our visit today from the Chancellor of the Exchequer; a summary of our celebration of achievement in school; information about teacher assessed grades; what our student leaders have been up to; upcoming Y8 personalised options; when to expect confirmation of Y9 options; sixth form information; advance notice of upcoming LIFE topics; places to access mental health support in the holidays; and a reminder about the return to school date and home testing during the break.

### Day of reflection

Stokesley School & Sixth Form participated in the Day of Reflection on Tuesday to mark the one-year anniversary of the country entering the first lockdown. To fit in better with our school day, we observed the minute's silence at 9.15am and this quiet contemplation was preceded with a LIFE session focusing on how we as a school community have supported one another throughout the pandemic and can continue to support one another going forward. Students were encouraged to reflect personally on the year, but also collectively with their peers, and to focus on the positives that have come out of this shared experience. It was wonderful to pop into different tutor groups and to hear the ideas that our students had: better relationships with family members; an appreciation of the little things in life; a greater love of the outdoors; newfound hobbies; breathing in cleaner air; and communities coming together to name a few. We are so proud of the way in which our school community has responded to the events of the last year, and the day of reflection was a great way to celebrate what we have achieved together and spare a thought for those we have lost.

### Visit from the Chancellor of the Exchequer

We were delighted to receive a visit from Rishi Sunak this morning, our local MP and Chancellor of the Exchequer. As well as showing him our new Sports Hall, part-funded by a government scheme, he took part in a question and answer session with some of our students. Students were chosen on the basis of their contribution to student leadership in school, and we also picked a few of our Y11s who have chosen to study A level politics with us next year. Mr Sunak answered questions about everything from the cost of student loans to whether pineapple is an appropriate topping for a pizza, and the students thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We're hoping Education Secretary Gavin Williamson will come next as we have lots of questions we could put to him too!

### Celebrating Achievement

Our heads of year have spent time during this last week preparing and filming the end of term achievement assemblies to celebrate the many successes of our students over the course of this term. Our team of tutors each select a 'star student' from their tutor group, heads of year select a 'star student' for their entire year group, and we recognise students





with the best attendance and those with the most ambition points. Not only are the students given certificates to recognise their achievements, we have presented over 100 prizes, mainly Easter eggs! I must thank Mrs Howard, Administration Assistant, who does a fantastic job running mail merges and printing off all the certificates in what is always a tight turnaround.

The attendance of our students has been nothing short of incredible since our return to face-to-face teaching on Tuesday 9th March. Attendance across the school is almost 97%. This is a remarkable effort and something we should all be proud of given the national picture: national attendance on the 18th March for schools in England was 91.2%! At Stokesley School if our attendance was 91.2% it would mean that over 100 students were missing out on their education daily.

Since January, school staff have awarded just over 40,000 ambition points. 14,000 of those have been for classroom contributions and 7,000 for outstanding classwork. Recognising positive behaviour and outstanding work is an integral part of Stokesley School and Sixth Form College. Having spent most of the last term working from home, it has perhaps been more important than ever that students receive that formal recognition that they have done a good job.

### Teacher Assessed Grades

Students in Y13 have taken formal assessments over the last week and applied themselves fantastically well. Y11 students are due to commence their formal assessments in the first week back after Easter and have been emailed the timetable for this. In addition to the formal assessments based in the exam hall, the informal assessment window for each subject has allowed our students who would have taken exams this year to have the opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in a range of settings since their return to school; this will continue up until May half term. Mrs Darbyshire was hoping to write to you with our full plans for awarding Teacher Assessed Grades this week; unfortunately, we are still waiting for the examination boards to respond to the consultation. We hope to receive this soon and we will write to you after the Easter break.

### Student Leadership

Despite the lockdown, our Student Leadership Team has been busy meeting virtually with Mrs Darbyshire and our Head Girl and Head Boy. We are thrilled to have had an additional twenty nine Y7 students join our ever growing group too! Some of the projects they have been working on include the relocation and design project for our Place for Peace (a memorial area for lost students and staff). Y8 students presented their designs to the group and with the support of Mr Green, our Head of Art, we now have a final design which we will be creating throughout the summer term. As well as this, our Green Group is working towards the Eco-Schools Award with Miss White. This week, reusable bottles have been on sale in every pod and further developments are planned for each half term. In addition to our larger projects, student voice also influenced our decision to have our Wellbeing Wednesday last half term and students' views on independent learning (homework) are informing plans to revamp the way we set independent work next year.





## Year 8 personalised options for Year 9

Shortly after Easter our Y8 students will begin the process of choosing their personalised options for Y9. These are not their GCSE choices but are a chance to study some of our subjects in more depth by having two lessons a week rather than the one they currently experience. The students will choose three options from art, DT, drama, food, IT, music, or to continue studying for two languages. We also offer a BTEC in Dance in Y9 too. For students who choose not to study two languages, they can choose which language to continue studying between French and German. More information about the subjects and what students will need to do to complete their option choices will be sent out after Easter.

## Year 9 GCSE/vocational options

Now that students have made their choices regarding which subjects they are opting to study through Y10 and Y11, we have begun putting together the classes and allocating the choices. The option subjects the year 9 students have been allocated to will be confirmed by letter shortly after the Easter holidays.

## Sixth Form Update

It has been a real pleasure interviewing over one hundred Y11 students who have applied to our sixth form next year; each and every member of staff involved has had nothing but praise for their maturity and are delighted they have chosen to stay with us next year. Barring the odd student that required a rescheduled meeting, they have now all taken place. Keep an eye out after the Easter break for a 'conditional offer' arriving in the post, which will contain challenging but realistic targets to help students secure their place in our sixth form.

If you have driven past the rear of the school lately you should have noticed that the building work is well and truly underway on the sixth form block. Our current sixth formers have settled into their temporary surroundings excellently, and they deserve real praise for making our return to college a big success. Unfortunately, our Y13 students won't experience the benefits of a refurbished block, but our Y12 and current Y11 certainly will. Exciting times ahead!

## LIFE update: teaching about relationships

Whilst the attention of our Y11 and Y13 students has, understandably, turned to revision and study skills in their LIFE lessons, students in our other year groups have been discussing careers. It's been great to hear students talking about a range of different jobs and career paths, and to see them starting to think about their own career journey and where their interests and skills might take them in the future.

We're proud of the way in which our LIFE curriculum equips students with the knowledge and skills that they need to lead healthy and happy lives both now and in the future. Coming up next half term is the topic of relationships, where students explore questions from 'what makes a healthy relationship?' and 'what makes a good friend?' in Y7, through to some bigger questions such as '*what is the law relating to sex?*' and '*what is exploitation?*' in Y10.



We're looking forward to seeing the way in which our students engage with these questions, and have no doubt that they will approach them with the same maturity that they have shown in their LIFE lessons so far this year.

### **Mental Health**

The Ethos team have been delighted to restart some of our small group interventions on mindfulness and self esteem (whilst following Covid safety guidelines). Over the Easter break, should you feel you need advice in supporting the mental health of your son or daughter, please use the links below to access information aimed at parents.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/make-it-count-guide-for-parents-and-carers>

### **A reminder about the return to school date after Easter**

We informed you last week that we have cancelled the training day on Monday 12th April to maximise learning for our students so soon after their return to school. The day has been rescheduled for Friday 18th June instead, which is noted on our website. This means all students will be back in school bright and early on Monday 12th ready to learn and have, hopefully, a disruption free half term.

### **Testing over Easter and updating school about coronavirus cases**

Students and teachers are required by the government to continue testing over the Easter break. This is an important part of the aim to continue reducing coronavirus infections. Students are being issued with additional tests during their period 5 lessons today (Sixth Formers may already have theirs). If you need more tests or need to report a positive or void test during the Easter break, please email [office@stokesleyschool.org](mailto:office@stokesleyschool.org) and we will pick it up as soon as we can.

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Have a very happy Easter!

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett  
Headteacher