



Friday 23rd April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the first fortnightly parent letter of the summer term. This is a shorter than usual update with a reflection on the sad news we are living with in school currently; a summary of safeguarding action we have been taking linked to national news stories; an update for Y11 and Y13 parents; a reminder about lateral flow testing; and important dates for your diaries.

A challenging return to school

Whilst the sun has shone on us at long last, a sadness has also gripped our school community. Staff, students, and members of our wider community have been shocked by the news that Mr Blyth, a member of our science department, has gone missing from his home. The longer he has been missing, the more concerned we have become. You will have possibly seen many posts on social media speculating about his whereabouts or sharing appeals to help find him. We do not intend to use our school's social media channels for this purpose, but have been supporting Mr Blyth's family and Durham Police in any way we can. In the midst of great sadness and worry, I have been in awe of the staff in our school who, despite their own fears and concerns, have modelled an essential 'business as usual' approach to supporting our students and carrying on with our core purpose of teaching and learning. Similarly, the students have been great: showing compassion for the situation, but remaining calm and focused on the daily tasks we must continue to undertake in school. At the time of writing this, there is no further news - we can only continue to hope that no news is good news. If your son or daughter is in Y11 and taught by Mr Blyth, we have already contacted you regarding the provision we have put in place at this important time in his or her education. For all other students, a science specialist will be in place for the majority of lessons from next week. Thank you for all of your messages of support that arrived in school late last week, we really appreciate it and are sure Mr Blyth would too.

Safeguarding

There has been a great deal of press coverage recently about sexual abuse of women following the disappearance of Sarah Everard in London. There has also been follow-on discussions about sexual abuse in schools, leading to the commissioning of a review into education settings' safeguarding procedures relating to this matter. In our school, I have delivered assemblies to all students in years 8-13 about the importance of equality and equity in society, what constitutes sexual abuse, and what to do if you are the victim or a witness to this unacceptable behaviour. Y7 will also receive an assembly in due course. I also informed our students about a new NSPCC helpline to support students, staff and parents with issues relating to sexual abuse which is 0800 136 663. Furthermore, we are currently revising next year's student planner and have included two pages of useful safeguarding and wellbeing information to help students gain support as and when they need it. If you ever have any questions or concerns about safeguarding in school, you can contact our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Myers, via j.myers@stokesleyschool.org.



Y11 and Y13 Update

We wrote to you at the end of last week to confirm the official leaving date for our Y11 and Y13 students which is Friday 28th May. Next week, Mrs Darbyshire will be writing to you with two further important pieces of information. Firstly, we will provide you with more detailed information about the processes we have in place for the awarding of teacher assessed grades; and secondly, we will share with you a menu of activities students can engage with for a four week period after their official leaving date to help them learn new skills, prepare for next steps and or gain some work experience with school. This will include taster days and bridging work for students who will be studying A Levels with us from September. We are also very hopeful that it will include an opportunity for students to come back into their school 'bubble' one last time to celebrate their time at our school.

Lateral Flow Tests

The Department for Education has asked us to remind our families about the importance of twice weekly testing to help stop the spread of coronavirus. Thank you for taking part in this important nationwide strategy.

Dates for your diaries

This is a quick reminder that Y10 parents' evening is next Tuesday 27th from 3.30pm and Y12 is the following week, Tuesday 4th May, also from 3.30pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher