



Friday 11th June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the first parent update of the last half term of the academic year. The sunshine last week helped everyone to have a pleasant and relaxing break, and we are all excited about this half term as we tentatively begin to look forward again rather than largely focusing on the management of the day-to-day challenges created by the pandemic. We hope you are all well too and also had some rest and recuperation over the bank holiday.

Attendance

As you know, we want all students to have an attendance figure of 96% or above. Students who have attendance below 90% are referred to as *persistent absentees* (PA). Whilst the difference of only 6% between good attendance and being PA doesn't seem like a significant one, the link between attendance below 90% and underachievement is clear.

We have been delighted with the attendance figures last term: the whole school figure was 95.1%. This is so impressive, especially when compared to the national figures which have been hit really hard this year due to covid. Since we returned to fully open schools on 8th March, nationally, the highest weekly attendance has been 93.7% which includes primary schools, where attendance is always higher on average than in secondary schools. Most weeks the national attendance figure has been between 88% and 92% - this really puts our excellent attendance in context. 810 of our 1000 main school students had 96% or above attendance last half term. In our sixth form, it is even higher.

We are already in the process of collecting prizes from our local businesses to reward students who have had outstanding attendance this year through prize draws in our celebration assemblies at the end of the year. Not only is attendance vitally important from an achievement point of view, it is also crucial to recognise the link between good attendance and healthy positive relationships and developed friendship groups. There is no doubt, from what we have seen in school this year, that the mental health and wellbeing of our students, along with their social development, is vitally important and naturally linked to being in school every day. As we move through the remaining 6 weeks of term, we want to maintain and even improve upon the attendance of our students. With the missed learning over the last year, it is more important than ever that every day of attendance counts.

LIFE - First Aid

As part of our LIFE curriculum, all students in school spent the afternoon with their tutor on Thursday and took part in a First Aid drop down afternoon. We were incredibly impressed with the way in which they engaged with the discussions and the training, and hope that they now feel confident that they would know what to do in a range of scenarios where basic First Aid is required. If you'd like to know more about the training, a letter was emailed to you from Mrs Fox - Head of the LIFE curriculum - on Thursday afternoon. You can also access this letter [here](#).



A level taster days

There has been a fantastic turnout from Y11 students to the A-level taster days this week, and every teacher involved has been full of praise for their attitude and maturity. From what we gathered, the students seemed to have enjoyed it too! We hope that each and every one has found the experience exciting, but most of all insightful, as it should either help solidify their original subject choices or help them to have an informed change of heart.

Whilst the taster days might be over, the opportunity to gain a huge head start into KS5 is still well and truly available to all Y11 students through the Google bridging classrooms. The codes for each class have already been shared with students a few times now, and there is a plethora of resources and guidance that can be found in all of them. Do not hesitate to contact the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Weedy via n.weedy@stokesleyschool.org if either you or your son/daughter needs to know more.

Site developments

I sent a quick update to you earlier in the week to let you know that our new parent and visitor reception is up and running. If you have already called in, you will have noticed that it is a much more professional and modern space. More importantly, though, it has increased security for our students and staff. Now, visitors cannot enter the main part of the school until their identity has been fully verified and, in addition, our receptionist is more protected from the waiting area. Slowly but surely, we are bringing our 1960s building into the modern day! Our Sixth Form refurbishment project is progressing well: we are hoping that the building will be watertight by the end of the month, and then have everything crossed for all completion of works and snagging to be done by the start of the new academic year. On top of that, our trust has submitted a bid to the Department for Education for a significant sum to refurbish our very tired and unsuitable technology department - we'll let you know the outcome of that bid when we hear later this month. During the summer, we have set aside enough money to refurbish our old reception area for the benefit of the students and we are currently replacing some very old fire doors to improve our health and safety. We are also in the process of scoping a trust-wide project to introduce more covered outside areas at our schools for students to enjoy when the weather is more inclement. Finally, we have designed a scheme to revive and refresh our Learning Support Centre which is a base used by our most vulnerable students, and students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). We do not have the money to fund this project, so are hoping for support from our fantastic PTA, but are also looking to do some fundraising - watch this space and any ideas are gratefully received!

Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges (published 10.06.21)

You will no doubt have seen, over the last couple of days, news about Ofsted's report of their review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges which makes some heart-wrenching claims about the experiences of some young people across the country. The review is into what Ofsted refer to as peer-on-peer abuse which, as the name suggests, is the way in which



young people can abuse other young people both on and offline whether this be through things such as cat calling, sexist name calling, making comments about their appearance, spreading rumours about their sexual activity, sharing of inappropriate images, or being photoed or videoed without consent.

We have, of course, read the report ourselves and are looking at our own practice in light of the information it contains. One of the main vehicles that schools have to tackle issues such as these is the statutory RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) curriculum, but the report has revealed that students in the schools visited were 'seldom positive about their RSHE lessons' and that 'leaders did not seek feedback from children and young people' or indeed the teachers delivering it, about this part of the curriculum. We are incredibly proud of our new LIFE curriculum at Stokesley school, but know that it will only work if our staff and students understand its significance and value. At the end of the spring term, we surveyed students on their experience of this curriculum and wrote to you - through the Headteacher's update - about their responses. Some key statistics for you here are:

- 82% of our students feel that they have an adult in school that they can talk to;
- 77% of our students see how the lessons are relevant to them and their lives; and
- 76% of our students understand the value of the LIFE curriculum.

Of course, we would love for these statistics to all be 100%, and have plans in place to move towards this but we wanted to reassure you that, in our school, the majority of our students engage with, and see the value in, these lessons which help them to understand the world around them. Your child will be able to tell you about a recent LIFE assembly which explained to them who they could talk to in school if they needed to and, should you wish, you can watch this assembly yourself [here](#) if you wish.

Our plans are to build upon the work we have already done on this sensitive topic which includes an assembly from me last half term and a follow up bulletin focused on 'doing the right thing', LIFE lessons for all year groups on the sharing of sensitive images, collaboration with a group of sixth form students on their experiences and some additional year 7 LIFE lessons on being kind to one another off and online.

Next, we will discuss a strategic approach with our fellow Areté schools and pull together a focus group of key staff and students who can explore, together, what more can be done to eradicate this unpleasant culture which clearly exists across the country.

Opportunity for families from North Yorkshire Local Authority (LA)

We have been advised that the LA are offering a free online Introduction to British Sign Language course for families for 5 weeks starting next Wednesday 16th June from 7.00-7.45pm. It will be friendly and fun. If you are interested, please contact Gaynor Stone for more information gaynor.stone@northyorks.go.uk.





Dates for your diaries

Friday 18th June is a professional development day moved from last half term. Students will **not** be in school on this day.

Term ends on **Thursday 22nd July at 12.30pm**. We have special and exciting events planned for our students during that morning that they will not want to miss.

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher