



Friday 25th June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to today's headteacher update which has information on the following topics: a reminder to carry out lateral flow testing at home and an update on yesterday's positive case; a description of our wonderful Y11 and Y13 celebration evenings this week; a change to our transition plans for Y6; an update on our actions following Ofsted's report into sexual abuse in schools; and a charity project being undertaken by our Y9 students. It's been another busy couple of weeks!

Lateral flow testing and a positive case

Students have been provided with another set of lateral flow tests this week. With rising cases in certain areas of the country, the Department for Education has asked us to promote continued twice-weekly testing at home to identify any asymptomatic case. Unfortunately, our school was affected by a positive student case this week - identified by lateral flow; this is the first time we have had to ask students to self-isolate since everyone returned to face-to-face teaching in March. There has been a sense it was coming, but we hope the government continues to develop an alternative strategy before we return in September because this current method of asking large groups to self-isolate is unavoidably disruptive to their education.

Y11 and Y13 celebration events

Due to the national restrictions which were in place last year we were unable to host our usual Smart Day and Prom. This was disappointing for all of us, especially the students. Throughout the year, Mrs Darbyshire has been working hard with Mrs Weschenfelder from our administrative team to create an event for this year's leavers which would be Covid safe yet allow us to celebrate the successes of our students. As the year progressed, it became clear that booking a prom at an external venue was extremely risky and to avoid disappointment - that some schools in the area have now had - we chose to organise our event within school. The bespoke celebration event took place over two separate evenings this week in order to keep our Y11 and Y13 pods separate. Each evening consisted of three sections: the formal subject and pastoral awards ceremony, followed by a barbeque and live music under the atrium, and finished with a final fun assembly. Our newly refurbished Sports Hall was transformed into a glamorous, Oscar-esque style venue, complete with a shimmer wall, red carpet and 2021 in bright lights! Students were encouraged to wear smart/casual clothing which they already owned saving parents/carers spending a fortune on a prom dress or suit in what has been such a financially difficult time for so many. Our students looked amazing and it was great to see their excitement as they arrived and saw the decorations as they walked into the hall. They really appreciated the attention to detail and the staff and tutors who came to support them for the events. Students were thrilled and really proud to see their friends receive awards, went back for seconds on the delicious barbecue and danced on the yard to the live music. Emotions ran high in the final fun assemblies, with a few tears being shed as the evening drew to a close. (That was just Mr



Hamer and Mr Weedy!) We took a number of photographs during the event and we also had a professional photographer who took pictures in front of the shimmer wall. Mrs Darbyshire will be in touch with parents/carers in Y11 and Y13 with details of how you will be able to access these next week. A few pictures are on our social media forums already. Suffice to say, two wonderful evenings were had by all and life felt a little bit normal again!



Transition for Y6 students

Following the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the delay to the easing of restrictions, we received information from the government which suggested traditional transition days could only go ahead in very restricted circumstances. After seeking



clarification, we have been informed that we can only run transition days in school if we can 'preserve the integrity of primary school bubbles'. In practice, this would mean keeping 31 small groups of students (that's how many different feeder primary schools we have) socially distanced from each other whilst also running a school for Y7-10 and Y12. Coupled with the fact that we also have less space in school currently due to our sixth form build, this renders transition impossible. We are very frustrated by this, but have written to Y6 parents and primary schools to reassure them that we will be doing a number of things in place of traditional transition to ensure the step up to 'big school' is as smooth as possible.

Ofsted report into sexual abuse in schools and colleges - an update

In my last update, I wrote to you about our reaction as a school into Ofsted's report of their review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. 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.

Along with Mrs Myers (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Mrs Fox (LIFE Curriculum Lead), I am pulling 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. Students have been asked, via student messages and their form teacher, if they would like to be part of this focus group, but we would also warmly welcome any encouragement that you can give at home if you think that they would be interested in taking part. If they would like to be part of our focus group, they'll need to send a short email expressing their interest to Mrs Fox (l.fox@stokesleyschool.org), who will then be in touch with them when we are ready to meet for the first time.

Y9 charity 'thank you' cards

Y9 students recently entered a competition to design a 'thank you' card. Their brief was to be as creative as possible, but also to include the main school year group colours: orange, purple, green, blue and red.

We have selected the 10 winners (from left to right) Abigail, Aimee, Alex, Jessica, Kate, Mily, Summer, Avarna, Cristian and Evie.

These designs will be printed into cards that will be available to purchase. The money raised will go towards the Y9 chosen charity "PAPYRUS" and will support the prevention of teenage suicides.



Dates for your diaries

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