

Headteacher's Update October 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

I will write to you at the end of each half term to give an overview of the half term and a reminder of key events and news for the half term ahead. I would like to start by thanking the students, parents and carers of the school for the fantastically positive start to the year. There have been many changes, and these have been embraced fully by the community and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. For further information on some of the events and celebrations we have held please see the newsletter published on our website and social media.

Stakeholder voice

We have worked tirelessly to ensure that all stakeholders feel that they have a voice and input into the workings of the school. We have recently re-established the student council and they are now meeting regularly to discuss leadership within the school and have been given a remit to focus on some key decisions in the school. They will also drive their own agenda to influence decision making and present regularly to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In the first instance they will be asked to decide how we want to make use of the hall during lunchtimes, discuss how to make the school more sustainable and think about the charity we would like to support as a school.

In addition to student voice, we have also provided additional opportunities for parents and carers to have their voice heard. We have recently had our first SLT-Drop-In for parents and carers, and we are encouraged to receive feedback that running sessions like this will really support communication between home and school. November will see the launch of the Parent Forum where parents and carers can work with us on a regular basis to meet, discuss and have solutions to support school in the local community. If you would like to be part of our Parent Forum please see our website for more information.

Communications strategy

I promised a review of the communication both into and out of the school. We began by looking at outgoing communications. I recently wrote to all parents and carers to outline how this communication would operate moving forward. A reminder that all parents and carers should download and make use of SIMS Parent App as this is now the main method of communication directly with parents and carers. Over the next half term, we will review the next steps of the communications strategy.

Attendance update

The DfE have published a new version of the [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118122/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf). This became statutory guidance on Thursday 29 August 2024. It is important to note that several changes have taken place which parents and carers should be aware of. There are new rules in place which aim to improve overall attendance and ensure that students receive the support they need to succeed. We are working hard with parents and carers to improve attendance but as an overall guide parents and carers should be aware of the following:

- Headteachers are unable to authorise holidays during term time unless for exceptional circumstances, this doesn't include quieter times for families with SEND children. In essence, this means that all term time holidays are likely to result in fines.
- Punctuality to school is being tackled at national level. If students arrive 30 minutes after registration (after 9.10am for Stocksbridge High School) they will be marked as unauthorised absence for the morning session. This means that students arriving after this time regularly would have an attendance of 50% for each of those days and would risk prosecution.

- The above point means that for parents and carers needing to make medical appointments for their child they should first report to school and then take them to the medical appointment and return them after. Where possible we would please ask that all medical appointments are made for out of school hours, although we appreciate that this is not always possible.
- Schools are expected to monitor attendance for patterns of repeat behaviours and can prosecute where they see evidence of such. E.g. if a student is often absent on a Friday.

Please note that these changes are the statutory guidance from the DfE.

Teaching and learning

This half term all subject areas have been working on refining their Do Now activities. These are knowledge recall activities that students complete at the start of every lesson. Each subject area has determined the style of their Do Now activities, following the principles that the activities are based on recall of core knowledge, follow routine, are accessible to all, and completed in silence in a set time limit. Feedback is given by the teacher and the information gained from the Do Now is used to plan future learning. Our teams have worked hard on this and we are very pleased with the results. Students are settling down quickly to work and learning time is being maximised during lessons.

As a whole staff we have adopted positive framing as a core element of our teaching and learning practice. Positive framing is a means of communicating the information our students need in a manner that motivates, inspires, and communicates our belief in their capacity to succeed. This links very clearly with one of our core values of 'be positive'. It has been a pleasure to see students and staff interacting with positivity and purpose, having meaningful conversations about their learning and progress and celebrating their successes. We will continue to build on this throughout the rest of the year and into the future.

Waves of recognition

It has been very exciting to be part of a 'Positivity Revolution' at Stocksbridge High School. We now have over 6000 achievement points being recorded weekly with all our students getting lots of positive recognition for being kind, confident, positive, and reflective. We are awarding Star of the Lesson, then receiving lots of great messages of thanks from our parents and carers when they get the notification at home. It is really encouraging to hear the students talk about wanting to get stamps/stickers and looking forward to being awarded an SLT Golden Ticket. Display boards around school are also showing departmental Stars of the Week, with students receiving their postcards making them feel a real part of the learning environment.

We now have a seventeen-strong School Council with students from all year groups, who are starting to work together on choosing a nominated charity, looking forward to organising events, and working with the community more. Their focus next half term will be Children in Need day, student voice activities, and planning Christmas community events. Well done to all those students who will continue to represent our school in the best possible light, and congratulations to Ruby P and Luke G who were interviewed and are our chosen Head Students. We also have an amazing fifty Ambassadors who will be working with lots of staff in the pastoral and curriculum areas to develop clubs, do some fundraising, assist at school events, student mentoring and wellbeing support.

Personal Development

Form time is now a forty-minute lesson at the beginning of the day and this time is being used effectively to cover issues such as dental hygiene, elderly care, organ donation and exam skills. The lesson gives students a positive start to the day, checking uniform and equipment, reviewing achievements from the previous day and building positive relationships. Assemblies this half term have included recycling, National Coding Week, Black History Month, the launch of Duke of Edinburgh and sport/fitness at Stocksbridge Leisure Centre. Enrichment clubs and activities have started, we were lucky enough to support Restart a Heart Day on Wednesday 16 October 2024 for all our Y7 and Y8 students learning CPR. We have had bake sales for Macmillan Coffee morning, a book fair, a Duke of Edinburgh expedition and a residential trip to Malham alongside many more.

PE tops

At the end of last year students requested options for a different PE top as they felt the black tops were too hot in the Summer. We consulted with Pinders Schoolwear and got two designs for them to have a look at. These were Grey or Burgundy to match with the colour scheme of the school. The newly established student council then surveyed a large proportion of the school population, and the results were:

Keep black PE tops: 368 votes

Grey tops: 59 votes

Maroon tops: 57 votes

We will therefore keep the Black PE top.

Key dates for your diary

Monday 4 November 2024 – Thursday 21 November 2024– Y11 mocks.

Tuesday 12 November 2024 – Y7 Parents evening.

Friday 29 November 2024 – INSET day.

Tuesday 10 December 2024 – Y11 Parents evening.

Friday 20 December 2024 – Final day of the Autumn term, school will close at 2.10pm on this day for an early finish.

Final thoughts

At the end of the longest half term with the nights drawing in and the mornings feeling fresher, I remain immensely proud to have been selected to lead this wonderful school. Your children are an absolute wonder, with sharp brains and strong values. This community is incredibly close knit and supportive. Together, we can do wonderful things and improve the lives of the next generation living and working in both the valley and wider afield.

Have a relaxing and spooky week off, stay safe and beware the 31st, for as the witches in Macbeth say, “something wicked this way comes”.

Yours hauntingly



Mr B Gilder
Headteacher