

19 December 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

Headteacher's update HT2 – December 2024

As we approach the end of 2024 and the Christmas holidays we again reflect on the journey of the academic year and the progress we continue to make. Year 11 students recently received their mock exam results, and the overall picture is very positive. The students are in a better position than they were in June and the impacts of the support and focus being provided are clear to see.

The Student Council is working with purpose and determination to provide opportunities for all students to engage in community projects and have an input into the leadership and direction of the school. To see some of the work that they have been doing, I would direct you to the newsletter published this week.

We have also now established a Parent's Forum and hosted our second SLT drop-in session. Feedback from stakeholders is incredibly supportive and suggestions for improvements on how we operate have been noted and are being acted upon.

There will be some exciting changes over the Christmas holidays to better support our learners within the building. Our SEND provision, colloquially known as Paragon, will be moving from its current location into their new facilities at the heart of the school. This is to ensure that all SEND support mechanisms are close to each other allowing more freedom of movement and flexibility in space. Students directly affected by this move have been supported with this transition to ensure that they feel comfortable with the changes. Some of our other inclusion-based hubs will also be moving and redesigned to ensure that we meet the needs of all learners, removing barriers and intervening swiftly to support them to access their learning and seek help where needed.

We are also joined in January by our new Deputy Headteacher – Miss Johnson. Miss Johnson joins us from Ecclesfield School, bringing a wealth of experience in senior leadership. Miss Johnson will be leading on Achievement and Outcomes, ensuring all students leave with the best set of qualifications for their future.

Teaching and Learning

This half term, we have placed a strong emphasis on developing the use of cold-calling in the classroom. Cold-calling is a strategy that teachers use to intentionally select students to answer questions, rather than waiting for volunteers. This technique has proven to be highly effective in increasing student engagement, as it encourages all learners to stay focused and prepared to contribute at any moment. We have been working on cueing students into cold-calling and making sure that we give thinking time. Our teachers will support students to reach a response, re-phrasing questions or giving choices to ensure that everyone is able to be successful. Questioning in this way helps to ensure that participation is evenly distributed, giving all students, regardless of confidence levels, the opportunity to actively engage with the lesson. Cold-calling also promotes accountability, making students more responsible for their learning and improving their ability to think and respond with

confidence. Additionally, this approach fosters a supportive learning environment where students can learn from each other's responses, enhancing overall classroom interaction and collaboration. Our students have embraced this approach with confidence and have been demonstrating a positive attitude towards their learning. We will continue to develop our teaching and learning approaches over the coming term and the rest of the year.

Behaviour and Standards

Effective behaviour management is essential for fostering a safe and supportive atmosphere where students can thrive. It helps in minimising disruptions, promoting respect, and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn. Managing behaviour is a crucial aspect for creating a positive and effective learning environment and as a school we continue to set these high expectations on a daily basis. As part of our behaviour strategy, we aim to consistently enforce these expectations with clear rules and consequences where students understand the standard that is expected of them. Alongside this we have had a real staff focus on raising the positivity around school, encouraging excellent behaviour and praising students for their positive contributions. Staff continue to build strong working relationships with students and take interest in their wellbeing on a regular basis. As a staff body we revisit the routines and rules set out as a school as well as conducting staff training to keep up to date with relevant behaviour management strategies. Effective behaviour management is a continuous process that requires patience, consistency, and a positive approach from all stakeholders.

Community and Engagement

What a wonderful way to end the term with lots of amazing events organised by our brilliant School Council and Leadership Team. They are an amazing team of students who are working hard on some fantastic fundraising activities that will support the community. We visited the Stocksbridge Food Hub and are now working on ideas that will support our local area, from looking at a donation centre at Stocksbridge High School to a new pre-school breakfast club run in school for our students. We look forward to this exciting initiative. Children In Need was a fantastic success raising nearly £1000 in aid of good causes, bringing our students closer together by having bun sales, activities and a non-uniform day. We are also developing further our links with Alpine Lodge in the next term. The launch of the Parent Forum and SLT Drop-Ins this past term is great news for our school; parents/carers and school coming together, sharing ideas, and looking to forging collaborative links and learning from each other about ideas, worries and solutions. Great discussions have been had - uniform, homework, systems and aspirations with better understanding on how the school can work together in the future.

Our staff and students have been amazing this term using the waves of recognition, with on average over 4000 achievement points per week being awarded. Students love being recognised for the good they do, and our Star of the Lesson and Golden Ticket students shine brightly every day. They will be recognised in the final week of term, with film sessions and reward assemblies alongside other creative activities run by the school council.

Our school has a stunning array of opportunities for the students to be involved in, from trips and visitors this past term - North Star Science School, Duke of Edinburgh, BBC Bitesize

Careers Roadshow, and the Malham Residential to name but a few. Students regularly attend clubs after school, with many attending Chess Club and Crochet Club weekly. This is so lovely to see and we are encouraged at how all the enrichment opportunities provided for our students is helping them to develop their life skills and support their wider cultural capital and personal development.

Key dates for your diary

W/b Monday 20 January 2025 Year 9 Options week
Tuesday 21 January 2025 Year 9 Parents' Evening
W/b Monday 3 February 2025 Year 11 MFL Speaking Mocks
Wednesday 5 February 2025 SLT Parent Drop-in session 3
Thursday 6 February 2025 Parent Forum
W/b Monday 10 February 2025 Y11 Mock Exams begin
Friday 14 February 2025 School breaks up for ½ term

Final thoughts

Christmas and the New Year are a chance for us all to **Be Reflective**, as a school we continue to reflect on what is working well and what could be improved. It is also a time to remember that some families within our community need all of our support to ensure that the festive season is a happy, warm and cosy one. If you, or someone you know need our support in any way please do contact us, and if we cannot help directly, we can certainly put you in contact with someone who can.

With best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,



Mr B Gilder
Headteacher