

13 February 2025

Headteacher's update HT3

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are now over half-way through the school year and the mornings and evenings are finally getting brighter again! Year 11 are now into their third and final set of mocks and preparations for their summer exams are well and truly underway. Year 9 have begun their options process, and this is now a more open and flexible system to enable more students to be able to choose the subjects they want to study. My thanks go out to the staff, parents and students for engaging fully with the process.

Our new Support Space for SEND has now been established and the students are benefiting from the improved provision and support available. Whilst talking about SEND, I recently had the opportunity to speak to the MP for Stocksbridge and Penistone, Dr Marie Tidball who is undertaking a review of SEND provision as part of a wider piece of work being done nationally. We were able to feed in the barriers and issues facing SEND provision in her own constituency and as part of that piece of work we invited her into school to see our provision firsthand. She visited on Friday 7 February 2025 and met with students and staff and opened our new Whitwell library area.

Parents/carers might be aware that during the recent snow closures a bus crashed into a house at the bottom of Shay House Lane. We have been advised that the road there will be closed in both directions from the ½ term holiday for 6 weeks. Parents/carers and students who arrive by vehicles from this direction will need to make alternative arrangements or approach school in a different way.

Online Safety and Social Media Use

We have a comprehensive and thorough online safety education programme in school. However, despite this support and guidance we are seeing an increase in the number and severity of students putting themselves at risk online. This is mostly through the sharing of images or personal information on various social media platforms such as Snapchat. We are also seeing students videoing incidents and sharing these videos.

We ask that parents/carers are vigilant about what their children are doing on their phones, and remind all stakeholders that the sharing of videos without the permission of the person on the video is illegal and police may get involved.

Social media is a part of wider society now and many people from all walks of life use social media as a platform to express views and images. We ask that all stakeholders of the school consider their use of social media and the effects and impact this might have on the people it is being shared with or about. We have been made aware of a number of 'Community Forums' regarding the area and some comments made on there directed at people who work in or for the school. I would kindly ask that any concerns about the school are directed towards the official channels, as well as to keep on sending us the lovely messages too!!!

For further information on online safety, please visit our dedicated section on the revamped school website here: [Online Safety Newsletter : News : Stocksbridge High School](#)

Teaching and Learning

This half term our dedicated teaching staff have continued to work on sparking curiosity and encouraging students to actively participate in their learning. We have also been developing our practice in questioning, using the 'cold-call' technique. During cold-calling the teacher asks a question to the whole class, giving thinking time and asking everyone to think about their response, the teacher then chooses a student to give their response, giving praise, encouragement and support so that students feel confident to have a go. We are really proud of our students for embracing this approach and building confidence to offer their thoughts and ideas.

We were also very proud to host colleagues from across the Minerva Learning Trust through our *Minerva Open Door* initiative. Visitors were impressed by the high-quality lessons they observed, particularly the student engagement aspect. It's a privilege to be part of such a dynamic community, where every lesson is an opportunity to inspire and empower our learners.

We have also been working on further developing our SEND provision. Person-centred student passports have been rolled out for our Year 7 students, with other year groups currently in process. This will help us to improve communication with teachers and support staff about the specific needs of a student and the best ways to support them both in their learning and at social times. We are committed to further developing our SEND provision and have welcomed an external audit this half term from Dr David Preston, who will continue to support and guide us as we move through the year. Thank you to all of our parents/carers who have been so supportive of our students, teachers and support staff.

Behaviour and Standards

Kindness is a fundamental value that we strive to instil in all our students. We encourage all students to be kind to one another, to show empathy, and to support their peers. Acts of kindness, no matter how small, can make a significant difference in someone's day and contribute to a more positive school atmosphere.

Conflicts among peers are a natural part of growing up and learning to navigate social relationships. We teach our students constructive ways to handle conflicts communicating openly and honestly while encouraging students to express their feelings and listen to others. As a school we will regularly remind students that teachers and school staff are here to support them on a daily basis, working together to address concerns and find peaceful solutions. We ask for your support in reinforcing these strategies at home and reminding your children that conflicts can be resolved in a respectful and positive manner.

Language is a powerful tool, and the words we choose can have a lasting impact. We emphasise the importance of always using appropriate and respectful language. This includes avoiding hurtful or offensive words and being mindful of how our words affect others. By modelling and encouraging positive communication, we can create a more respectful and inclusive school community.

Community and Engagement

We continue to build on the successes of HT1 and HT2 with the Student Council starting to run their lunchtime activities (Bingo) and raising money to support the Year 11 Prom. The students are enthusiastically working together to raise their profile and to start coordinating sub-groups of ambassadors to work in different areas of school, for example, student voice, recycling and community groups such as Stocksbridge Food Bank and Alpine Lodge.

Enrichment trips this half term have included:

- South Yorkshire Police assembly about Consent to the Year 9s
- Sheffield Hotels Trips for Hospitality and Catering Year 10 students
- Theatre trip to watch Chicago
- 2 trips to Sheffield College for taster days in Construction and Sport
- Careers Marketplace when thirteen Post-16 organisations attended
- Various Year 9 events to support option choices including a talk from Chapeltown Academy
- Visit from Dr Marie Tidball, local MP for Penistone & Stocksbridge, opening our new Library
- Headteachers Golden ticket breakfast and rewards events

We have had lots of parent/carer and student events in the past months, and it is lovely to see so many of you coming into school and engaging with the things we do to support your child in their learning, their progress and the decisions they make. We had over 80 people attending our Year 9 Options Event which was fantastic.

We encourage you to get in touch by using the avenues we have, to build strong positive lines of communication. Each half term there is the opportunity to book an appointment at our **SLT Drop-Ins** and discuss openly things you may be worried or concerned about, and you can join the **Parent Forum** when a group of parents/carers meet termly to meet, talk and to find solutions. We would welcome your input to grow and reflect on the things we do in school.

Key dates for your diary

Monday 24 February – Friday 7 March 2025 – Year 11 Mock exams continue

Tuesday 4 March 2025 – Year 10 Parents' Evening

Thursday 6 March 2025 – World Book Day

Wednesday 19 March 2025 – SLT Parent drop-in session

Monday 24 March 2025 – Parents Forum

Tuesday 25 March – Year 11 Parents' Evening

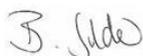
Friday 28 March – Friday 11 April 2025 – Easter Holidays

Final thoughts

In light of the events in another local school, I want to again reassure all students, parents/carers and families that the safety and safeguarding of our students is and always will be the number one priority of the school. We constantly review and discuss our emergency procedures to ensure that we are as prepared as we can be for any eventuality. In the modern world we have to be prepared and aware of so many influences on our young people and I would urge all parents/carers to have conversations with their children to reassure them of where they can go for help and advice.

For a full list of websites that can support families please visit our website here: [Mental health and emotional wellbeing : Students : Stocksbridge High School](#)

Yours faithfully



Mr B Gilder
Headteacher