

27 August 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Stocksbridge High School, we are committed to providing every student with an excellent education through consistently high-quality teaching. As part of our new Trust-wide approach to excellent teaching and learning, we will be introducing a lesson model from September that is designed to help all students learn successfully, deepen their understanding and achieve their potential.

A key element of this approach is a period in lessons called '**The Blue Zone**'. The Blue Zone is an important feature of excellent teaching because it helps teachers understand how securely students have learned new knowledge and skills, whilst also developing the confidence, resilience and independence that students need to be successful both in school and beyond.

We wanted to share with you what the Blue Zone is, why it is important and what it means for your child.

What is the Blue Zone?

The Blue Zone is a dedicated period within lessons where students work independently on a challenging task. During this time, they apply the knowledge, skills and understanding that have been taught earlier in the lesson.

Rather than relying on immediate support from teachers or classmates, students are encouraged to think carefully, persevere and demonstrate what they can do on their own.

The Blue Zone is typically the most challenging part of the lesson and will last for at least ten minutes. Students will complete Blue Zone activities in blue pen, allowing teachers to easily identify and review independent learning.

Why are we doing this?

Research tells us that deep learning happens when students have opportunities to think hard, practise independently and apply what they have learned.

The Blue Zone helps students to:

- Develop confidence in their own abilities.
- Build resilience when faced with challenge.
- Improve concentration and focus.
- Prepare effectively for examinations where they must work on their own.
- Take greater responsibility for their learning.

By giving students regular opportunities to tackle challenging tasks independently, we are helping them develop skills that will benefit them not only in school, but throughout their future education, careers and adult lives.

What will this mean for your child?

During the Blue Zone, your child will:

- Complete a task independently. In some practical subjects, such as Drama, PE or Modern Foreign Languages, this may involve working with others where speaking and/or performing is an essential part of the activity.
- Work in a calm and focused environment – mostly in Positive Climate 1
- Be encouraged to persevere when they find something difficult and be praised for trying their best.
- Apply learning and demonstrate understanding from earlier in the lesson, without relying on immediate support.

Teachers will continue to play an active role during this time by circulating around the classroom, identifying misconceptions and gathering information that helps them adapt future teaching to meet students' needs.

Supporting resilience and independence

It is important to understand that students will likely sometimes find Blue Zone activities challenging. This is intentional. Learning is often at its strongest when students have to think deeply and work through difficulties independently. We want our students to develop the confidence to tackle challenges, learn from mistakes and persevere when tasks become difficult. Staff will support students through positive framing, encouragement and praise, helping them to see challenge as an opportunity to learn and improve.

How can parents support at home?

You can support your child by:

- Ensure they have a blue pen as part of their equipment from September onwards
- Encouraging them to persevere when work feels challenging.
- Asking them what they learned and celebrating effort when thinking hard.
- Reminding them that making mistakes is an important part of learning.

Looking ahead

We are excited about the positive impact the Blue Zone will have on your child's learning and personal development. By regularly practising independent thinking and application of knowledge, students will become more confident, capable and successful learners.

Thank you for your continued support,

Yours faithfully

James Furness
Assistant Headteacher