



20<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following our return from the Half Term break, we start Term 4 with fresh drive and enthusiasm. This is the business end of the year now, with external examinations imminent, along with Year 9 starting their GCSE courses in just a few months. Record numbers of students have applied for a Sixth Form place and applications for the next Year 7 are more over-subscribed than ever.

I will be addressing the students in various forms this week. Please find attached a video that I have made for them, along with a Powerpoint that will be used in assemblies and Form Time:

Video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hqZ6S6Et72UFhk7sV0JFoXCOPmLp1boC/view?usp=sharing>

Powerpoint:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17x4IH2ThfEB\\_4RpoiX411YBfpoLaWWHk/edit?usp=sharing&oui=100769754036801363352&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17x4IH2ThfEB_4RpoiX411YBfpoLaWWHk/edit?usp=sharing&oui=100769754036801363352&rtpof=true&sd=true)

Most of this letter covers the same material.

## **Behaviour for Learning**

It feels like I've written about this too much this year. However, I have not. I have found that all stakeholders in the school – staff, students, parents, Governors – are all grateful that we are transparent about our current issues with the behaviour of some students. We noted improvements in behaviour across the School just before the break and look forward to this trend continuing.

We start our new term with some tweaks that will not affect 1100 of our students.

The key changes are:

- After-school detention will run “next day”, every day, for students who truant lessons, or walk away from staff
- Arguing has become too much of an issue and we will clamp down on it

## **Vaping**

Sadly, we find ourselves fighting a wave of vaping. Not all families accept that this is every bit as bad as smoking. We have no idea what the long-term effects of vaping are, but we do know that our lungs generally are damaged by just about anything other than fresh air.

A new measure will be in place:

- Students in toilet cubicles together tend to be vaping or writing graffiti, or both
- Students caught together in a toilet will be sanctioned with a day in SSU as a minimum

## **Physical Contact**

The idea of a “no touching” rule was discussed before the break. Most families will know of a terrible incident that happened in the School following reckless, inappropriate physicality. This sparked an understandable spike of concern amongst the whole school community.

The School is a place of learning and physical contact has no place in lessons or corridors. It has always been - and always will be - sanctioned.

In social times, our students make all kinds of normal, positive contact. We wouldn't dream of trying to stop this. However, some over-the-top pushing, shoving and jumping takes place. We have simply asked students to stop this recently and they have responded so positively – thank you.

## **“Banter”**

Our Anti-Bullying Policy has banned banter since 2019. However, it has crept into daily life at School and it is time to stop it once again.

It is not fair to expect staff to know the difference between friendly and unfriendly comments, between friends and otherwise. So called “banter” is not appropriate in our place of learning. In particular, any discriminatory behaviour, including sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist or other comments will almost certainly result in sanctions and will be recorded.

If it is reported, we can deal with it – [antibullying@buckinghamschool.org](mailto:antibullying@buckinghamschool.org).

## **Uniform**

Simply put: hoodies, white socks, trainers and wrong skirts are not allowed.

Please do not be surprised if we withdraw your child from circulation in School, or even send them home, if they have uniform issues that cannot be solved. We will also confiscate incorrect items, such as hoodies. These do not substitute for blazers. We proudly support our families in solving issues with their child's uniform, including the cost.

We also note the cost of two very popular brands – Hoodrich hoodies are more expensive than a jumper and blazer. The favourite trainer currently is off the scale in price compared to school shoes.

The new skirt style is compulsory from September, so we strongly recommend that all replacement skirts are in this style.

The current uniform featuring School logos (blazers, ties, current jumpers, PE kit) will be welcome for as long as it is in good condition. Obviously, we recommend any replacement items being bought now are new uniform. Check our Policy carefully; many items are available from high street suppliers. We chose our supplier, Uniform Direct, because of their blend of good quality and fair price.

## **Catering by *Innovate***

On a far more exciting note, our new catering company begin this term. *Innovate* were one of many bidders for the opportunity to become our caterers and already successfully cater in a number of local schools.

There will be some changes to the dining room routines, including the welcome return of plates and cutlery for main meals. “Grab and go” type food will still be available, but we are sure students are going to quickly notice the wide variety of healthy and appetising food on offer. *Innovate* will be employing more staff, too, so service should be even quicker than it is currently.

## **Academic Standards**

In the last few months, the vast majority of our students have diligently got on with what they need to do. Our teaching staff continue to prepare what is needed to engage and inspire the vast majority of our students. In the last week of Term 3, two interview candidates were separately bowled over by the classes they taught (prospective teachers always teach a lesson as part of the interview process); highly impressed by the students' appetite to learn and their curiosity.

Our assessment data shows us high standards across Key Stage 3 in the three core subjects – most notably Year 9 Maths, Year 7 English and all three Years in Science. I am seeing greater confidence in literacy than ever before. It is a fact that many of our students arrive at TBS requiring support in this and more and more of them are receiving it in good time.

Years 10 and 11 are progressing well and Year 11 have the chance to shine in their upcoming Mocks. Compared to last year, Year 11 are in a good position to match those “best ever” results.

In the Sixth Form, our largest ever Year 12 are excelling themselves and are already achieving higher standards than any of their predecessors – except Year 13, who are giving them a run for their money.

We are a school that is dedicated to making sure students can excel and that everyone has the opportunity to find within themselves their own potential. Reward points are given for displaying our seven Virtues: Ambition, Confidence, Curiosity, Empathy, Integrity, Resilience and Respect. Students who can display these tend to go a long way towards fulfilling their potential.

I am proud to note that, this year, reward events eclipse behaviour points in the ratio 9:1 - far more than we aim for.

We have put in place yet further support for those students who are not always ready to learn, because we want them to be the best version of themselves too; avoiding behaviour points by choosing to seek support and accessing the same rewards as everyone else. Not just emotional support, as we continue to grow our SEND team to support our growing numbers of identified students with their needs.

### **Attendance**

The greatest support to academic success is good attendance. Across the whole country, school attendance has not recovered since the Covid-19 lockdowns and self-isolations. Our attendance is 88% in the main School and 92% in Sixth Form.

In total, we have nearly 100 students maintaining 100% attendance and nearly 450 who are at 96% or better. Year on year, our GCSE and A Level results consistently demonstrate that those students who attend school well, do better. If we can support your family in any way please contact [attendance@buckinghamschool.org](mailto:attendance@buckinghamschool.org).

### **Potential Strike Action in March**

Please note that further strike action could take place on the following dates: 1<sup>st</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> March.

There does not seem to be any resolution to the dispute at the moment and we are likely to follow a similar pattern to that on 1<sup>st</sup> February if there is to be action, prioritising the students with external examinations this year. We will let families know well in advance.

The last few months have been a challenge for us all and I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the dedication and expertise of our staff. They do their very best to support the students and welcome the support of the vast majority of families who are supportive and courteous.

With best wishes,



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