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Headteacher Mrs Rachel Kelly BA (Hons)

Dear Parents and Carers

The Autumn Term at Stour Valley is coming to a close and it has certainly been a busy one. This letter focuses on the highlights and looks forward to the Spring Term.

### **Open Evening**

We held a very busy and successful Open Evening for Year 6 students and their families on Thursday 11 October. Over 200 families attended on that night to look around our school. The following Mon-Weds we also did tours during the school day for Year 6 parents/carers. Initial numbers are looking healthy for the September 2020 cohort.

### **Rewards Evening**

We welcomed back the class of 2019 to our annual Awards evening in late November and presented them with their GCSE certificates. It was so pleasing to see so very many students achieve highly in the summer examinations and prove resilient in the face of the new and more challenging GCSEs. The very top '9' grades were achieved in Food Technology, Art & Design, English Language, Maths, Statistics, Biology, Physics and History and we celebrated those results as well as celebrating excellent progress made from so many of our students, regardless of their starting points.

This year the Founding Governors Award was shared by three of our Year 11 students. They were Madaline Smith, Alban Smith-Adams and Cameron Young. In their different ways that each had shown tremendous commitment and resolve in overcoming considerable obstacles to succeed, they made striking contributions to the school and the wider community or secured progress that was far and above that which was expected, given their starting position in Year 7 in the school. Above all they exemplified the very best of what students at this school could achieve, and were splendid role models.

### **Year 11 Mock Examinations**

Our current Year 11 students have just finished three weeks of GCSE mock exams, and they are surely all looking forward to a well-deserved Christmas break before the studying towards those final examinations will begin in earnest in the New Year.



## School Trips and Activities

There have been a number of trips out this term. In September some students from Year 7 went to Clare Castle Park to join in with the **Suffolk Archaeological Dig**. During September, two groups of Year 7 students took part in Archaeological excavations in the inner bailey area of Clare Castle Country Park. Along with many local residents and experts, students sorted, scraped and sieved, and the number of skeleton remains soon became clear. Probably the most significant result this year was to identify the sheer scale of the pre-Norman cemetery; burials of which were found in each of five trenches. Stour Valley Community School hope to take part in further excavations next year.

Every year, many SVCS students take part in **Remembrance services** and parades as Cadets, Brownies, Scouts and other organisations. This year was no exception, with Year 8 students representing the school in Clare Church by reading the Roll of Honour and Kohima Epitaph in the service there. In school, students took over the Remembrance assemblies reading their own poetry and ideas on the theme of courage. A poppy wreath was also laid at the foot of the Remembrance memorial in school.

In October Year 9 went to **The Suffolk Skills Show**. This show brings together employers, schools, colleges and training providers in order to offer students the chance to work out which careers are of interest to them and match their strengths, then find out the best route to get the right skills for the job. There was also a trip to the **Houses of Parliament** in November.

Thank you to all the staff who have organised these trips. It is wonderful to see how we enrich our curriculum offer at Stour Valley in this way.

## Christmas Concert and Other Creative Arts Activities

The Christmas concert was a real highlight of the term. The students were an absolute credit to themselves, their parents/carers and the school. We saw a real variety of performances and a lot of talent. There was a capacity audience and performances included the best of Stour Valley drama, music and for the first time at this event, dance. Over 10% of the student population took part in the performance and showcased the depth of talent across all year groups.

Earlier in the week, Key Stage 4 musicians took part in Clare's Community Carols at The Baptist Church with many groups representing other local schools, the Brownies and local churches.

A further highlight of the week was the opportunity for students to perform with opera duo *Belle Voci* at their concert at St Peter and St Paul's church in Clare. *Belle Voci* are rising stars of the classical music scene having been finalists on *The Voice* and secured the number 1 download in the classical charts earlier this year. This was an incredible experience for our students to gain an insight into the world of the professional musician.



## **Staff Changes from January 2020**

### Head of Music

Mr Watson was appointed for the Autumn term to lead the Music Department temporarily. He has done an excellent job, as those who came to watch the Christmas concert will have seen. We are very grateful to him for his contribution this term and wish him well as he takes up a new position as Director of Education with an educational charity organisation.

Mr Sodey will be joining us in January to take up his position as our new permanent Head of Music.

### Learning Support Assistant

Mr Chinnery left us earlier in the term, to take up a position in a primary setting. He was with us for three years, the only male in the Learning Support team, and he is sadly missed. He will be replaced by Miss Brown in January.

## **Behaviour and Expectations**

Thank you for your continued support in helping us uphold our high expectations of appearance and behaviour. I know that you appreciate how hard the staff at Stour Valley work in order to uphold the high standards for which the school has always been recognised. For the most part, our students make that quite straightforward; which is a credit to you and to them. I am really proud to show visitors around the school who always comment on the calm and purposeful atmosphere and how immaculately turned out, thoughtful, considerate and ready to learn Stour Valley students are. The new term will see a renewed push on ensuring that all students are meeting our expectations with regard to uniform. Please do check the uniform policy if you are buying new or wanting to clarify our expectations – skirt length is an issue with some students. Governors reviewed and ratified the policy in December.

<http://www.stourvalleycommunityschool.org/images/SchoolUniformDec2019.pdf>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your ongoing support and remind you that we return on Monday 6 January. On behalf of all the staff and governors, I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

With best wishes and kind regards

Rachel Kelly, Headteacher

