

17 December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you

As we reach the end of a 15-week Autumn Term I want to thank you, our parents, for working with us to help mitigate risk and keep the school running in a way that is as 'normal' as possible in these challenging times. We do seem to have been very fortunate to have been largely unaffected by positive cases so far, which will be partly due to the lower infection rates in this area but also how well we have all adhered to our risk assessment. The messages of support and positive feedback we have received from many of you have been very much appreciated and, as I said in my letter before half term, your children are a credit to you and to us for how they have done what has been asked of them and helped make this work for all concerned. Thank you for your support and understanding. I also want to publicly thank the amazing, dedicated staff at Stour Valley who have welcomed your children back and worked tirelessly to maintain our community spirit of working together and achieving together.

As well as running timetabled lessons, we have managed some extras this term, and I want to share the success of some of those positive activities with you.

Prefects and Student Voice

This year we have an outstanding team of 14 prefects. Since September they have:

- Supported with lunch duties (and they create the rota themselves every half term).
- Launched a support offer each Friday break for younger students based in Student Support.
- Created a Student Council - they selected the members themselves and have held two meetings. In the most recent meeting, they are leading a project on reducing litter at Stour Valley - the prefects are supporting the Student Council in creating an awareness virtual assembly for all students.
- Set up a Prom Committee and held one meeting about this.
- Led two virtual assemblies – 'Meet the Prefects' and 'Anti Bullying' - They also judged anti-bullying posters and put these around the school in anti-bullying week.
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Our first online Parents' Evening

School Cloud is a platform that a number of schools are switching to in order to allow them to run parents' evenings remotely. We trialled the service for the Year 9 Parents' Evening on 3rd December and following overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff and parents we have decided to roll this out for other year groups.

Weekend Tours

Instead of creating a virtual Open Evening, we decided to offer Year 6 prospective students and families personal tours over 3 weekends in October. Senior Leadership Team, Year Leaders and Heads of Faculty volunteered to take part and we had a team of 10 teachers leading personalised tours. Feedback from parents was incredibly positive and they were very grateful for the opportunity to be able to go round and see the classrooms and just experience the building; this being particularly so for those with their first child moving to secondary school. We gave 129 tours for families from 27 different primary schools. I am enormously grateful to the staff who gave up their weekends to do this.



Charity Events

Miss Woods and her Charity Council have done a great job of organising charity events this term. On 2nd September we raised £72.95 for Macmillan.

On 9th September we said [#HelloYellow](#) in our school to show young people they're not alone with their mental health. Together we've got this. We raised a grand total of £598.15.

Thank you to everyone who donated items for our "Christmas Pop-Up Shop". We raised an amazing £163.90 for the UK Make A Wish Foundation which will go towards life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

SVCS Charity Council collected food donations for Haverhill Food Bank. Thank you for your donations and your support – this is something so positive to do for our community. Thank you to Ms James for dropping off the donations.

And last Friday was Christmas Jumper Day for Save the Children and we raised over £500.

We may be a small school, but we really do punch above our weight when it comes to fundraising!

Christmas Show

This year Miss Duffy, our Faculty Leader of Creative Arts, was determined to give the students the opportunity to perform in a Christmas concert, despite COVID. Miss Duffy, Miss Whitaker and Mr Sodey worked hard to come up with a virtual show plan and launch it to students. We paid to have the performances professionally filmed and put onto USB for parents to buy as a 'Virtual Concert'. A whopping 188 students signed up to be involved. All of Year 7 performed, as well as smaller numbers of Years 8, 9 and 10, plus 6 Yr 11 GCSE Music students. It was lovely to hear the students rehearsing and there was a real buzz about the place on the day of filming. Well done to all the students involved.

Credit to our Year 11 Students

Year 11 completed three weeks of mock exams earlier this month and their behaviour and efforts were outstanding. I think this year group deserve a special mention in these uncertain times for remaining focused and trusting in and working with their tutors and teachers to get them through this. We understand that these are worrying times for Yr 11 parents – and indeed for all parents. The added pressure for Year 11s who have their all-important final GCSE examinations next year we acknowledge cannot be easy. Now that mock exams are out of the way, do make sure that they enjoy the time off at Christmas to ensure that they are rested and ready for continuing to work hard in the New Year.

Staff and Governor Changes from January

Mrs Mayes has resigned her position as Year 9 Year Leader from the end of this term and will make her main focus leading the Art department. I would like to thank her for how she has supported all her year groups to become the best they can be over the years. Mr Leppard will be replacing her from January. Mrs Mayes will become the new tutor for Mr Leppard's former tutor group and share this responsibility with Mrs Gill.

Miss Spearpoint, our Head of Year 11 and Subject Leader for Religious Studies, will be starting her maternity leave soon after Christmas. Mr Jenkins will be covering her Year Leader responsibilities during her absence and we will be welcoming a new teacher, Mrs Bowen, to teach her classes.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Bursell for being Interim Chair of Governors this term. He stepped up when Professor Richard Smith retired last summer and has been a great support this term. The new Chair of Governors from January will be Mr Vosper. He has a lot of experience in education and we are looking forward to working with him. If you need to contact him, please do so via the school office.



COVID and test and trace during the school closure period

Contact tracing will not be taking place in the usual way during the Christmas Holiday when the school will be closed and there is less chance of school-based contacts existing. Please follow the guidance attached if your child begins to show symptoms of COVID-19 during the early part of the Christmas Holiday.

If you are contacted by the school because your child is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, they must self-isolate for 10 days following the positive contact.

Do make sure you contact the school (studentabsence@stourvalley.org) if your child will be absent on the first day of the Spring Term 4 January due to COVID-19 self-isolation.

Happy Christmas!

All that remains is to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The new term begins on Monday January 4th 2021.

With kind regards

Rachel Kelly
Headteacher

