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Headteacher Mrs Rachel Kelly BA (Hons)

20 December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

The Autumn Term saw us returning to school with temperatures soaring and the weather considerably better than we had had throughout the summer holidays. Following the news in late August/early September being full of horror stories about schools not being able to open on time and/or having to move into temporary accommodation, we were relieved to be able to report that we did not have any RAAC following a visual inspection conducted by the site team, as per DfE guidance in May 2023. As you know, the Trust took the decision to appoint an independent structural surveyor to undertake intrusive RAAC investigations over October half term. The result of these was that SVCS did have some RAAC present in the ceiling of the upper floor music block. Reports were forwarded to the DfE who confirmed the entire music block would need to be out of bounds until emergency remedial action could be taken to make at least part of the building safe and usable. Music lessons (having been temporarily housed in the library) will be back in the downstairs of the Music block from January and work on the upstairs will take place over the Easter holidays.

By October half term, the heat and sunshine had disappeared only to be replaced by heavy rain. We took an unprecedented decision to close the school on the Friday before half term following staff and school buses not making it to school due to flooded local roads and the rain continuing to fall heavily. And then two more closures at the end of the week following half term, also due to flooded local roads. We have since reviewed contingency plans, as plans for 'snow days' were not fit for purpose; we have also reviewed and updated our remote education policy and guidance. I am grateful for your support and understanding over this; it is never an easy decision to close the school.

Events and Activities during the term

In October there were a number of events for Year 11 at SVCS focused on post-16 and careers. We hosted an evening post-16 and careers event which gave students and their parents some valuable insights in applying to a variety of post-16 options. As well as ideas for higher education and careers in policing, STEM and health alongside local jobs.

Year 11 also enjoyed an Adult Life Skills learning day with sessions on finance, car maintenance and safety, apprenticeships and gambling issues.

Last Friday at SVCS all students had the opportunity to attend the BBC Bitesize School tour focused on Careers. They heard from three panellists: Joe May, a freelance production secretary; Steph Parmee, the learning manager at Gainsborough House; and Jacob Ottaway, a BBC broadcast journalist. Each year group had a session tailored to their age



range and alongside hearing the personal career journeys of the hosts, heard messages not limited to the following:

Persistence is really important; Try your hardest in everything, you might surprise yourself; Take responsibility for your work, your applications, your opportunities; GCSEs don't determine your success, your attitude and effort does; Follow your passion, do what you love and what you're good at; That you can change your mind at any stage, a job is not a lifetime commitment; The importance of employability skills.

Year 7 have all had afternoon trips to Clare Library and to Harris & Harris Books where they have enjoyed time dedicated to reading and books.

The SVCS school library has put on a number of events and competitions throughout the term and Year 9 students visited 'Starbooks' in the library where they were given the opportunity to read through and look at books from genres that they would not normally choose whilst enjoying a drink and some pastries.

There have also been two SVCS theatre trips – one drama trip to see Metamorphosis at The Mercury in Colchester and one to see a production of A Christmas Carol at St Mary's Church in Sudbury.

The SVCS Climate Emergency Committee took part in more sapling planting on November 21st, bringing our total to 1350 trees over the past four years. Around 40 students worked hard to plant 140 trees into the ground at two sites, SVCS grounds and Charlie's Wood in Clare. We are grateful to the Woodland Trust Green Space trustee, Neil Bagshaw, of Clare Country Park and TASC (Community Action Society of Clare) with whom we have planted saplings on many occasions.

SVCS celebrated Purple Day for a second time on November 22nd in memory of Haydn Restarick, who died in summer 2022. Haydn would now have been in Year 12, loved the colour purple and the annual event is held on his birthday. Students and staff wore non-uniform, often choosing to wear purple, and donated money to Addenbrookes Hospital, where Haydn was cared for. Although younger students did not know Haydn, the day provided the whole community with an opportunity to remember things which were important to him, including the playing of games and the importance of friendships. A total of £556.63 was raised.

And finally, last week's Christmas concert was full of joy, with so many brave performances from a whole range of students. The two Harrys - SVCS' very own version of Ant and Dec who compered the whole show were brilliant - well done to them both. A huge thank you to both our Music & Drama depts for pulling it all together and to everyone who helped make it all come right on the night.

Staffing Changes from January

Mrs Plumb, Head of Year 7 at SVCS, is retiring and Mrs Hutchinson will take over leadership of Year 7.

Miss Bank, Deputy Headteacher, will also be leaving at the end of this term. Miss Bryant will be joining the SVCS senior team as Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for Behaviour and Safeguarding in January.



Ms Chappell, teacher of Psychology, will also be leaving Stour Valley. She is leaving the teaching profession altogether and will be starting a new role with REACH charity in Haverhill in January. She will be replaced by Miss Hickson-Pritchard, who will also be teaching some Music.

Mrs Norris, teacher of Science, will be moving to a position at a different school. Mr Sims, Assistant Headteacher (a Science teacher) will be replacing her in the Science department. Mrs Kornasova will be teaching more Maths from January.

Mrs Mayes, Head of Art, will be leaving to take up a position with West Suffolk College and Miss McGinity and Mrs Tibbles will be teaching Art and Photography from January, replacing Mrs Mayes and Mrs Plumb in the Art department.

Mrs Morey, Student Support Officer, will be leaving at the end of the term to take up a position at Newmarket Academy. Mrs Hare will be replacing her in mid-January.

We thank them all for their contributions to our school and wish them well with what they do next.

Uniform Reminders

Thank you for your ongoing support with ensuring that your child(ren) wear the correct uniform. Here are some reminders prior to the return in January.

Jewellery: A watch and one pair of stud earrings are allowed. All other jewellery should be left at home. No visible piercings are allowed, other than a single 'stud' type earring in the lobe of each ear. This includes tongue piercings and other body piercings. Please note that any piercings will need to be removed for PE and Technology.

Skirts: All skirts worn must sit and remain on the knee or below. Cotton jersey and thin lycra are not allowed. There are acceptable skirts available through our uniform suppliers, Price and Buckland, or you can purchase a similar style from any other supplier. If you would like to see an example of the skirts, we have a few sample sizes in school.

Hair and make-up: Extremes of fashion in hair styles and hair colours are not allowed. Natural hair colours only are allowed. Shaved designs of any kind are not permitted. A small amount of make-up is allowed provided it is discreet and unobtrusive. Students will be asked to remove make-up where this is not the case. Coloured nail polish/varnish (including 'French Manicure'); 'gel' or acrylic nails are not allowed.

The school should be contacted prior to purchase if there is uncertainty about whether certain styles of uniform item are acceptable. Below is a link to the uniform policy, which can be found on our website.

[School Uniform Policy SVCS - July 2023.pdf \(stourvalleycommunityschool.org\)](https://www.stourvalleycommunityschool.org/School%20Uniform%20Policy%20SVCS%20-%20July%202023.pdf)

All that remains is for me to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Students will return to school on Thursday 4 January 2024.

With kind regards

Rachel Kelly, Headteacher

