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Headteacher: Mrs Rachel Kelly BA (Hons)

31 March 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

We have reached the end of the Spring Term 2023. In this letter I will reflect on some of the challenges we have faced this term and I will also celebrate some of the highlights of the term.

Tragedy

We began the year with the most tragic of events. We could not quite believe that our Y11 (and the rest of the school community) were dealing with the death of a second student in six months from the same year group.

We are all so proud with how our students came to school to support each other that week. They dealt with a range of emotions in a mature and dignified way. The school nurses who came in to provide extra support that week told just how fantastic our students had been, and what they described as the level of maturity and ability to articulate their feelings shown by the students they saw, which included a lot of the most affected Year 11 boys. Harley's funeral took place over half term, as I am sure many of you will have seen on the local news.

Mr Lee has been working with students to do something in memory of Harley and this will take place after the Easter holidays.

Safeguarding Response to January's events

On Wednesday 29 March St Giles Trust came into school to run sessions on knife crime with all year groups throughout the day. This was as a safeguarding response to the awful events of that day. We felt that we needed to leave some time and space before these sessions were run. The Team is working with Suffolk Police School Liaison Officers and the One Cop Stop programme and Jane Stannard RSHE Schools Engagement Coordinator.

The aims of the sessions were to ensure that our students can:

- Describe reasons that make young people vulnerable to carrying knives;
- Identify risks and consequences of carrying a knife;
- Explain why there is no safe place to stab someone;
- Recognise the increasing involvement of women and girls in knife crime;
- Know that carrying a knife is a crime that can carry a four-year prison sentence.

Students were advised to think carefully about what they are watching on social media, including music videos, as watching violent things can de-sensitise them to violence and things that someone their age really should find shocking.

They were told that any person, be that a friend or anyone that is supposed to care about them, who puts them in an unsafe position, such as asking them to carry a knife, clearly does not have their best interests at heart.

They were told about incidents of serious injury and death from just carrying a knife – how there were more cases than they might think of people carrying knives and falling onto them.

Staffing Issues

Thank you for your patience and understanding following me sharing with you in a letter some of the staffing challenges we have faced this term. I am happy to report that all vacancies are filled for the summer term and Mr Nathan Sims will join us after Easter as our new Assistant Headteacher. Mr Rob Thompson will join as our new Head of PE and Mr Pierce Chapman will join us as a Geography teacher.

I have made some changes to the structure and responsibilities of the senior team.

Miss Bank, Deputy Headteacher, is our Designated Safeguarding Lead and also the school's lead on student Behaviour, Attendance and Welfare. She will be Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 and 9) Raising Standards Leader and line manage the Y7, Y8 and Y9 Year Leaders in this role.

Mr Nathan Sims, Assistant Headteacher, will be the Key Stage 4 (Year 10 and 11) Raising Standards Leader and will have overall responsibility for the behaviour and welfare of Year 10 and 11. He will line manage the Y10 and Y11 Year Leaders in this role. He will also be Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Mrs Gemma Stronach, Acting Deputy Headteacher, will lead on Curriculum, Quality of Teaching and Staff Training and Development.

I have promoted Mrs Chester, SENDCO, to Assistant Headteacher. Her responsibility is Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. She will work closely with the Year Leaders and pastoral support team in this role and well as with Mrs Stronach on quality of teaching.

Curriculum Enrichment

I am ever in awe and grateful to SVCS staff who, despite the pressures we have been under this term, indeed this academic year, continue to enrich our curriculum offer with trips, visits, and activities.

Grease

This term the whole-school production of Grease was an absolute highlight.

When the curtain went down on High School Musical 2019, we had no idea that it would be another four years before we were able to put on a whole school musical production again.

The dedication, hard work and enthusiasm of the children embodied our school values of being brave and collaborating, and every student involved pushed themselves to be ambitious and do their best. Hats off to them all, on stage and behind the scenes. It was wonderful to see how inclusive the production was with students experiencing success and teamwork in a way that they do not always experience in day-to-day lessons.

Ski Trip

A group of staff took 52 students to Italy for the February half term week. Anyone who follows the school on Facebook or Twitter would have had regular updates including lots of fantastic photos of happy children and staff. The staff who went came back tired but loved every minute of it and could not have been more proud of the students. Below is their summary of the week:

Every day the students came off the mountain buzzing about what they had achieved, comparing how good they were and the sights they had seen from the top of the mountains. Tenacity paid off and the group left Italy feeling very accomplished.



The trip firmly embodied our school values.

Be Kind: Student helped each other with boots, moral support and carrying equipment.

Be Brave: Students attempted steeper slopes than they thought they could do, tried new runs, and turns and accepted failure at times.

Be Ambitious: Students aimed for bigger slopes, refusing to let injury hamper progress.

Collaborate: Student worked out the runs and managed their own problem solving.

Year 9 Careers Day

On Wednesday 1st March, Year 9 enjoyed a collapsed timetable day focused on careers. They had a session delivered by a company called 'Medical Mavericks' looking at different areas of healthcare including phlebotomy. They also used a software programme called Xello to explore what options they will make, using a quiz to match their personality, likes and dislikes to possible future careers. They met police officer and, in the afternoon, played 'Guess my Job' with 18 visitors to the school who then told them more about the careers they had chosen and why.

English Curriculum Enrichment Days for Y10, Y11 and Y8

On the 17th of January in the morning Quantum Theatre visited to perform 'A Christmas Carol'. This was a brilliant production and it kickstarted revision for the Y11 groups and consolidated the learning in class for Year 10.

On 7th March Year 8 were off timetable for sessions with an outside company, West End Schools, to bring to life their understanding of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Active Bystander Training for all students

As a part of our commitment to developing the whole child and encouraging students to speak out if there is anything that happens in our school that makes them uncomfortable, we have given Active Bystander Training for our students. This is a natural progression from the work done last year, led by our Ethics Committee, to create the Stour Valley Community School 'Code of Ethics,' a part of which is 'when you see something, say something'. It is important that the whole school community takes responsibility for creating and nurturing an environment which is safe, supportive and free from all forms of bullying and harassment. This is an active step to achieve that.

Years 7, 8 and 9 have undertaken active bystander training provided by [Active Bystander Training | Challenging Antisocial Behaviour - The Active Bystander Training Company](#)

This training outlines the 5 Ds: Distract, Delay, Delegate, Direct, Document and then students discussed how they would respond to 4 scenarios that we provided (based on real incidents that have happened at our school). This was also the topic of a year 11 PSHE lesson. The company have offered one additional session for free which we will offer to year 10.

Green Day and Green Awards

Our third Green Day was a huge success and we raised over £700 for green initiatives around school. SVCS Climate Emergency Committee students attended the Greenest County Awards after being shortlisted for the 'Green School' category. The awards have been running for many years and are an opportunity to recognize the hard work being done in the community, in business and through schools. SVCS came second out of twenty-two schools. It is wonderful to have our work on green issues recognised and the CEC are still buzzing with ideas and plans.

Prefects

This week Miss North has been collecting the applications from Year 10 for the new prefects.

There have been over thirty applications. They will be interviewed after Easter and ready to take over from the current Year 11 prefects. This means that we will soon be 'changing the guard' and this year's



wonderful group of Year 11 prefects will be stepping aside to let the Year 10 prefects take over from early May.

This year's group of prefects have been an absolute credit to the school and I want to thank them most sincerely for all they have done this year. They are: Miriam Bursell, Mabel Stocker, Darcy Hertz, Jordan Wright, Tilly Drakard-Lester, Abigail Nicholas, Marla Rouse, Esther Lawson, Mabel Stocker, Ethan Brown, Thomas Cornwall, Lucas Lyons, Henny Walker, Rory Warrack, Olivia Webb, Joe Webb.

Return to school after the Easter break – expectations

Equipment

Some students have not been as well equipped as we would expect recently. Would you please check that your child has all the required equipment for their return on April 17th. The following is a list of equipment that students should bring to their lessons.

- Ruler
- Pencil case with name clearly marked
- Black or blue biro or handwriting pens, minimum of 2
- HB pencils, minimum of 2, plus pencil sharpener
- Eraser
- Scientific calculator
- Reading book

Uniform

Uniform standards for some students have slipped a little this term, in particular girls' uniform. I am asking for your support next term with ensuring that your child's uniform conforms to our policy – in particular skirts should reach (and should remain) at the knee. I have picked up an increasing number of girls whose skirts do not reach the knee, when I ask them to adjust them. Please also ensure that your daughter does not come to school with false nails, false lashes and that makeup is discreet.

Currently, Year 11 students are working hard as we approach the summer examination period. We wish all our Year 11 students the very best over the next few months.

All that remains is for me to wish you all a Happy Easter and remind you that students return to school on Monday 17th April for the summer term.

With kind regards

Rachel Kelly
Headteacher

