



From the Headteacher - 18 September 2026

Dear Parents

There can be no doubt that once the new academic year begins, the pace of school life quickly returns. With homework starting for the first time for pupils in Year 7 next week, it is safe to say that all pupils and staff are hard at work learning and teaching the curriculum once again. At the same time, there is also a slight feeling of disbelief that it is week three already.

Induction Events

The first two Year 7 forms have enjoyed their residential trips to Stratford-upon-Avon this week, an important milestone in the year that gives our newest pupils the opportunity to strengthen existing friendships, make new ones, and get to know their Form Tutors.

Last week, students in Year 12 also enjoyed their trips to Croft Farm near Tewkesbury for team building activities out on the water.

My thanks go to all the staff who worked so hard to organise and support the trips, helping to make them such a successful part of our induction programme.

Alongside these trips, it has been great to meet so many new parents at our Year 7 and Year 12 Information Evenings over the past two weeks.

School Improvement Plan (2026-27)

As I would have mentioned this time last year, each year we use our self-evaluation from the previous academic year to determine our School Improvement priorities. These priorities will fall into one or more of our four main development pillars:

- **Academic Achievement** – *curriculum development; learning and teaching.*
- **Support and Development** – *student support; Personal Development; student behaviour; student progress.*
- **Community** – *staff CPD; staff workload and wellbeing; community relations.*
- **Resourcing** – *finance; infrastructure; facilities; sustainability.*

The annual *School Improvement Plan* (SIP), written in collaboration with our Trustees, supports our journey towards our five-year development plan (2024-2029):

[Priorities for Development 2024-29](#)

This year, our SIP focuses on a number of key areas, including embedding our Super-Curricular offer, which is designed to make activities explicitly obvious to pupils so they may extend their knowledge beyond the standard curriculum and deepen their understanding of each subject discipline. This year's SIP also seeks to further develop our whole-school inclusion strategies, alongside our continued sharing of the very best teaching pedagogies across and between departments.

Whilst working towards these areas, we also continue to sustain the areas of the previous two years. This includes the systematic use of the most effective, research-backed methods for checking understanding within lessons, the championing of the incredible work of our ever-increasing number of student leaders, and the detailed monitoring and analysis of all that goes on in our school day-to-day, so that we may strive to continue providing the best experiences for our pupils and staff.

Colleagues will share further updates throughout the year to keep parents informed of our work in these key areas.

Alumni Day

Once again, I was delighted to speak with many of the alumni who came in last Friday to talk with Year 13 students about their university choices and career paths. Hearing real-world experiences from a range of different industries and professions made the sessions extremely valuable for our students as they plan their next steps. We are enormously grateful to the increasing number of alumni, some of whom left us over 20 years ago, who gladly return for this event to support their old school each year.

A reminder that if you or the company you work for would like to get involved with careers mentoring, our February Careers Fair or through offering work experience placements, our Head of Careers Mrs Manning would be very pleased to hear from you (jam@strs.org.uk).

Extracurricular Taster Fortnight and House Competition

Starting next week, pupils from all year groups will have the opportunity to try out new clubs and societies during our Extracurricular Taster Fortnight (Monday 21 September – Friday 2 October).

This is a great way for pupils to put themselves forward to showcase their existing talents, as well as to try something new; the poster for the Taster Fortnight can be found [here](#).

On a similar theme, this week the highly competitive House Competition has been launched once again, each House receiving a rousing and inspirational assembly from our Heads of House and Student Leaders, each referencing the near 100-year history of the competition. Whilst the competition was won by Southgate last academic year, from the strength of feeling presented in each of the assemblies this week, it is certainly all to play for once again.

On behalf of our Heads of House, I hope your son or daughter will be keen to put themselves forward to support their House in the many different events and competitions taking place this year.

Attendance

As ever, a reminder that full attendance at school remains crucial in helping your son or daughter to achieve highly and maximise their personal development. Whilst, of course, periods of illness or other unavoidable reasons for absence can occur, we remain mindful of the Department for Education (DfE) guidance that stipulates that the national attendance target is 95%, with attendance rates above this described as good or excellent attendance. To put this into context, a pupil would need to be absent for just 10 days across an academic year to fall below this threshold.

As we begin the new year, I would also like to give a polite reminder to parents that the updated [DfE guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance; July 2026](#) gives me limited scope for authorising a planned absence from school. However, I remain very grateful for the timely, open and honest communication from parents when such a need might arise.

Further details on our approach to supporting high attendance will be shared by Mr Daniell (Attendance Officer) next week, and we greatly appreciate working in close partnership with parents to maximise school attendance for the benefit of our pupils.

School Event Parking

As with last academic year, we aim to make parking available on the tennis courts for all after-school events (entrance via Gate 1). We will endeavour to advertise these arrangements for each of our events too.

Where possible, we will try to make parking available on the tennis courts for events during the School day where we can; we will make this clear ahead of the relevant event too.

Sport

Our Netball players enjoyed their first matches this week, with two sides winning against Chosen Hill School away on Wednesday afternoon, 38-8 and 27-3 respectively. I wish our teams the very best of luck against Cheltenham Bournside School next week, and Cheltenham Ladies' College the week after.

Following some carefully risk-assessed pitches, given the recent dry weather, last weekend the 1st XV Rugby Team narrowly lost to Bromsgrove School away 15-17 in The *Daily Mail* Trophy; congratulations go to the 3rd XV for winning their match with a decisive 29-5 final score. As with Netball, I wish our teams the best of luck for their matches against The King's School Worcester on Saturday.

I hope you have an enjoyable weekend.

Best wishes



Matthew Lynch

HEADTEACHER

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