



Pastoral Update - From the Deputy Headteacher

Dear Parents

I am pleased to share our first Pastoral update of the academic year. This is an opportunity to celebrate our pupils' achievements, share upcoming House events, and highlight the work we are doing to support pupil wellbeing and recognise positive contributions across our school community.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the exciting opportunities and successes from the start of the year.

PSHE

Year 7 students have made an excellent start to their PSHE curriculum, focusing on managing the transition to secondary school, developing positive learning habits and goal-setting skills. They have also explored the importance of healthy friendships, including how to recognise and respond to coercive friendships. Next term, students will begin a unit on personal safety, including visits to SkillZONE, which are already well underway and provide valuable opportunities to develop practical skills for staying safe and making informed decisions.

Year 8 students have explored the health risks associated with vaping, while also examining attitudes towards alcohol, the law relating to alcohol use, and strategies for managing risk. They have considered the impact of alcohol and cannabis on decision-making, health and wellbeing. Next term, students will move on to a unit exploring the business of influence, including how social media platforms shape content through algorithms and the ways in which artificial intelligence is increasingly affecting our daily lives.

Year 9 students have been developing their understanding of healthy and respectful relationships, exploring the concepts of consent, freedom and capacity to consent, relationship values, and contraception. These lessons have encouraged students to think critically about personal boundaries, mutual respect and informed decision-making. Next term, students will build on this learning through a unit on sexual health, managing the end of relationships, and understanding the feelings, risks and consequences associated with sharing nude images. This work will continue to strengthen students' knowledge and understanding of how to develop and maintain safe, respectful and healthy relationships.

Year 10 students have explored the risks, consequences and support available in relation to drugs and alcohol, developing their understanding of how substance use can affect physical health, mental wellbeing, relationships and future opportunities. Students have also considered strategies for making informed and responsible decisions when faced with risk-taking situations. Alongside their PSHE lessons, tutor time sessions have focused on online safety, including how to recognise and respond to online scams, sextortion, and other forms of digital exploitation. Students have also explored the importance of setting personal boundaries online and protecting personal data, helping them to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

Year 11 students have focused on mental health and wellbeing, exploring how the brain's reward network can influence behaviour, motivation and habits. They have developed practical strategies to improve focus and concentration, reduce distractions, and establish positive routines to support their learning and wellbeing. Through tutor time, students have also explored managing risk in unsafe and emergency situations, protecting their finances online, and recognising their own skills, strengths and personal assets. Alongside this, they have been developing effective revision and study strategies to help them prepare confidently for their examinations and future pathways.

All PSHE teaching is in line with safeguarding best practice, ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. Lessons are informed by PSHE Association resources or other reputable sources to ensure accuracy, consistency, and alignment with current statutory guidance. This helps ensure that teaching is up to date, reliable, and reflects best practice in PSHE education. Teachers use clear ground rules, distancing techniques, such as case studies and anonymous questioning to support engagement while maintaining pupil privacy. Staff are trained to recognise safeguarding concerns and follow the school's reporting procedures promptly where needed. Lessons are age-appropriate, carefully sequenced, and reinforced through consistent messaging about consent, respect, safety, and where to seek help both in and out of school.

Enrichment

The Year 12 enrichment curriculum provides students with valuable opportunities to develop essential life skills, broaden their understanding of important issues and prepare for life beyond sixth form. The first round of lessons has covered a wide range of topics, including alcohol safety, consent, stress and time management, higher education, positive relationships and recognising unhealthy relationships, identity and cultural diversity, employability and the labour market, and responsible online behaviour, including developing a professional online identity. These sessions aim to support students' personal development, wellbeing and future aspirations, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and navigate the next stages of their lives.

Whole School Assemblies

Whole-school assemblies have now resumed, alongside regular Heads of Year assemblies, providing an important opportunity to bring pupils together and reinforce our shared values and expectations. My recent whole-school assembly focused on the theme "*Doing What Is Right When No One Is Looking*," encouraging pupils to demonstrate integrity, make positive choices and uphold our school values even when others are not watching. Last week, Mr Daniell delivered a whole-school assembly focusing on the importance of taking responsibility for our actions, admitting when we have done something wrong and seeking help when needed. Pupils were encouraged to recognise that making mistakes is part of learning and that being honest and asking for support early can prevent situations from escalating. The assembly reinforced the importance of accountability, making positive choices and learning from our experiences.

The Tommy's Award

This term saw the launch of the Tommy's Award, introduced through Head of Year assemblies and tutor-time sessions. The award celebrates pupils who go above and beyond in school life and encourages personal development through service, enrichment and leadership opportunities.

The award has five levels (Bronze through to Diamond) and is based on four key strands:

1. Curriculum – developing self-discipline, thinking skills and core knowledge
2. Service and commitment – demonstrating leadership and connection
3. Extracurricular engagement – participating in careers, trips and creative activities
4. Supercurricular excellence – excelling in subject specialism and academic reading

For Year 12 students, completion of the award can be used as a useful part of the leadership application process, with evidence to be submitted by 9 January and successful candidates recognised at a celebration assembly in February.

For Years 7-10, evidence should be submitted by 28 May, with pupils who successfully complete the award being recognised at a celebration assembly in July. The award provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to showcase their contribution to school life while developing valuable skills for the future.

Merits

Since the beginning of the academic year, subject teachers have awarded just under an incredible fourteen thousand merits to recognise pupils' effort, achievement and positive contributions. The categories with the highest number of merits awarded are Behaviours of Learning, Thinking Skills and Core Knowledge.

Following pupil feedback, to celebrate consistent efforts, the top two merit scorers in each form group will now receive a half-termly certificate and a piece of STRS stationery as recognition of their hard work and commitment.

Wellbeing

Our pastoral provision continues to be a key priority, and I would encourage parents and carers to explore the Pastoral pages of the Sir Thomas Rich's website [here](#), where you can find information about our pastoral team, wellbeing guidance and a range of useful resources and support.

Our School Nurse, Khadiza Uddin, is available for pupil drop-ins on Tuesday lunchtimes by Reception, with pupils also able to access the Gloucestershire School Nursing confidential text service on 07507 333 351.

I have also had the pleasure of meeting our new Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, representing all Key Stages. They have been presented with their badges and will play an important role in promoting positive 'upstander' behaviour, supporting pupils and helping to organise anti-bullying events.

Anti-Bullying Week takes place from 16–20 November, beginning with Odd Socks Day on Monday 16 November. All pupils are invited to wear odd socks to celebrate individuality, with a suggested £1 donation via SCOPay to the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

Each half term, we put together a Mental Health and Wellbeing newsletter with information that we think parents will find useful. Please click [here](#) to access this term's edition, and previous editions can be found on the pastoral pages of the School website.

Mobile Phones

I would like to thank you for your continued support of our new mobile phone policy. Your support in reinforcing the expectations at home has been invaluable and is helping us to create a focused, positive and distraction-free environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

We are always reviewing our school policies and practices, and parental feedback is important in helping us do so.

In relation to this, I would like to share a research study being conducted by the University of Gloucestershire in partnership with The Cyber Trust. The study, titled *The Family Internet Safety Project*, is exploring how families

engage with parental monitoring tools to support safe digital practices among children aged 11-12 years.

The University of Gloucestershire is seeking to recruit families who meet the following criteria:

- Have a child in School Year 7 (aged 11-12 years)
- The child regularly uses a smartphone, tablet, or similar device
- The family has internet access at home
- The parent/caregiver is willing to trial a monitoring tool for a 6-month period

Participation involves completing short surveys and interviews over the course of the study. Families will receive free access to a monitoring tool and up to £65 in Amazon vouchers as a thank-you for their time.

Please click [here](#) for more information.

SEND

Gloucestershire's SEND and Inclusion Partnership has launched two anonymous annual surveys: the third Annual Parent Carer Survey for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND, and a new survey for young people with SEND aged 16-25 who receive education or support in Gloucestershire.

The surveys will inform continuous improvement across education, health and care. The parent-carer survey is shorter and easier to complete following co-production with Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum and SENDIASS.

The survey will close at 5.00pm on Friday 4 December 2026. Please click [here](#) to access the parent survey.

House events

House Cricket marked the start of the 2026/27 House competition in exciting fashion in the summer term, with pupils demonstrating teamwork, determination and excellent sportsmanship throughout the tournament. The competition was closely contested, with every House earning valuable points towards the overall House Championship.

So far this term, pupils have already participated in a range of House events and competitions, earning House points while developing teamwork, resilience and a sense of community:

Harvest festival - Pupils have been contributing generously to our Harvest collection, helping to support a local food bank. Houses earned points through donations and participation, demonstrating our commitment to helping others and serving the wider community.

Chess - The competition saw some excellent strategic play and close matches between the Houses. Congratulations to Southgate, who claimed first place with an impressive 20 points. Westgate finished as strong runners-up on 18 points, while Newgate secured third place with 12 points. The competition was closely contested throughout, with Northgate finishing fourth on 9 points and Eastgate fifth on 8 points. Well done to all pupils who took part and represented their Houses with skill, concentration and sportsmanship.

Badminton - Pupils competed in House badminton matches, showcasing determination, teamwork and skill. The competition proved popular, with strong participation across year groups and some closely fought matches.

Upcoming House events - the annual House Drama competition promises to be a highlight of the House calendar, with each House presenting its own unique pantomime. Pupils are working hard on performances, demonstrating creativity, teamwork and dedication.

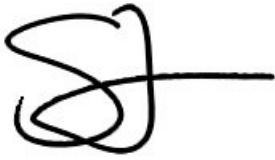
This year's pantomimes are:

- Southgate – *Peter Pan*
- Eastgate – *Treasure Island*
- Northgate – *Alice in Wonderland*
- Newgate – *Dick Whittington*
- Westgate – *Puss in Boots*

We look forward to an entertaining afternoon showcasing the teamwork, creativity and talent of our pupils.

It just leaves me to say a sincere thank you for your continued support of the School, and I wish you and your family a restful October break.

Kind regards



Miss Sarah Tapscott
Deputy Headteacher

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