

October 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

Busy Half Term

This term has been incredibly busy but with lot of events and progress being made in school. The pastoral evenings were very well supported and provided key information for parents; the presentations for these evenings are on our web site should you wish to view them. The open evening was also a great success and was very well attended; we expect to be oversubscribed again this September.

A highlight of this half term was our Peace and Reconciliation week. This special week commenced with the visit of Barry and Margaret Mizen whose 16-year-old son Jimmy was murdered in South London. They talked to all our students about peace and reconciliation. As a result, students have established a Justice and Peace group and a Good Hope Café to raise the profile of such issues within society. This important talk was also delivered to our Multi Academy schools as well as to members of our community at an evening school event. All year groups have attended their Mass of Welcome celebrated by Father John. These celebrations were linked to the charities that each year group is raising money for this year. This was an integral part of the Year 7 Retreat day in school recently. This included the Year 7 Mass of Welcome and the launch of the Parable of the Talents fundraising event for the Father Hudson's Society.

A number of students from across all years represented our school at the Combined Schools Mass on 13th October. This is an important event where schools from across the deanery celebrate their faith together.

The Youth Chaplaincy team (YCT) continues to be a strength in leading our community in promoting our Catholic ethos. Their work this half term has included the Year 6 Retreat day, the Combined Schools Mass, the Good Hope café, the 15 Minutes of Faith Programme for all forms as well as meeting to plan liturgy and evaluate the impact of their important work. In addition, the Chaplaincy team and YCT have organised a special event to mark October as the month of Mary with community members from the parish praying rosary in the Chapel and enjoying a good cup of tea with students and staff.

Examination Success

In the summer we had some fantastic examination successes. Over 83% of our students achieved their GCSE A*-C in English and 63% in maths, overall giving us a Basic figure of 63%. We are particularly pleased with our Progress 8 score which has been confirmed by the Department for Education as +0.15. Likewise, at A Level it has been confirmed that our students made significantly more progress than the national average.

Year 11 Mocks

We wish the Year 11 students good luck with their imminent mocks. It is imperative that they use their time to revise thoroughly for these exams. All year 11 students have been assigned an Assertive Mentor and will have a Mock results day on Tuesday 29th November. We look forward to seeing year 11 students at our open evening for the Sixth Form on 10th November.

Sixth Form

Sixth Form have had a superb first half term and Year 12 are now settled into their studies. Induction week started in September with a visit from Staffordshire University who worked with students to get them A level ready, focusing on study skills and various progression pathways. Year 12 also visited Keele University to explore what university life is really like and the different courses available. The UCAS application process is now underway and we're thrilled that six students have made early competitive applications with our first student already receiving an offer from Liverpool University!

We look forward to seeing Year 11 students at our Open Evening for the Sixth Form on 10th November and guiding them in making decisions for their future. We're excited to be offering more courses than ever before including Health and Social Care, Media, Business BTEC and Economics. These will enable us to further build on our outstanding success in the summer where 98% of students passed their qualifications and every student progressed into a university course, apprenticeship or directly into employment.

Last week we welcomed Tristram Hunt MP to St Thomas More; he came in to talk to sixth form students about aspiring to be more. This was organised by our Head Girl Shakira. Tristram Hunt tweeted afterwards that 'it was a great pleasure, top students, great questions and packed with potential.' It was a superb morning and we're excited that Tristram will be involved in our mock interview process in the future.

Enrichment

There is now a full programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities available to our students, details of which are on posters around school and on our web site. Our Twitter account often features details of these activities. They include the following:

We have entered two teams into the Young Engineer Of The Year award for the first time through the project organised by KMF. We will be competing against over 20 schools and wish everyone involved good luck. The Duke of Edinburgh Award has started with our First Aid training for the Bronze group and practise expedition preparation for the Silvers. The first expedition of the season to Shropshire was extremely successful and the views from the Long Mynd and Stiperstones were amazing, as were the team of Silver Year 11s involved. Young Enterprise has also been launched in school; both the Business department and DT department are working together so that our two companies have a great chance of succeeding. They have attended the launch at the World of Wedgwood and we look forward to purchasing their exciting products.

Performing Arts

In 2017 the School will be putting on a production of Godspell, we are very excited about working to put this together with the students over the coming months. Auditions have taken place and parts awarded. In September a number of our Year 8 students took part in a STOMP workshop

delivered by The Regent Theatre. Premiered back in 1991, STOMP has been on our stages for over two decades, demonstrating how everyday household items can be used to create beats and rhythm in interesting and imaginative ways. The workshop links in with a STOMP-inspired module that Year 8 study in performing arts. Students really enjoyed being able to learn about it in a different and exciting way.

Business Studies

Every year Stoke City Community Trust run a competition for the pupils across the Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire area to take part in; this year's assignment was to create a greeting card and prepare a complete marketing plan to present to a panel of judges. Over 100 entries were submitted from across the city and of those just seven teams were selected to present their campaign to the judges. Two of our teams made it through to this stage: Millie Chadwick, Nicole Vidigal Dos Santos and Isabelle Thorley as one group, and Komail Shah, Awais Ahmed and Adil Ali as another. Three teams were chosen as winners, one of these being Komail, Awais and Adil. A massive well done to all of our students for taking part and representing the school, particularly to those in our winning team!

Geography

The sixth form have completed their individual research fieldwork to Cornwall where they studied coastal geomorphology along the north and south coastlines. Students have now selected their individual titles to undergo full enquiry projects as a result of the data collection and statistical analysis now being complete. We even had time to visit the inspiring EDEN project to assess the extent at which sustainable tourism was reality or a complete myth. This month has also been a busy month of modelling various coastal landforms with years 10 and 11 - we have got through many a box of Weetabix!

Premises Work

Work on the sports hall and gym has been completed with a new roof, windows and upgrade to heating and lighting. There have been additional works to roofs and windows throughout the half term. This work continues after half term and disruption has been kept to a minimum but the cooperation of students is expected at all times.

Parent Pay

Thanks to all parents who have returned their Parent Pay letters. Please can I encourage you to register online. In addition to using this system for payment it will allow us to email letters home rather than the traditional letter in a bag.

Parent Survey

We have commissioned the NFER (National Foundation Education Research) to carry out a survey to all parents and students on their views of the school. This will be then benchmarked against national surveys enabling us to use this feedback to improve even further. Details will be sent out this week.

E Safety

There is detailed information and guidance on our website about helping your children to stay safe when they go online. E-safety continues to form a central part of our curriculum and PSHE days. Forensic monitoring software has been installed on all our machines ensuring that our students are safe online in school too.

Standards

May I remind parents that a number of items are not allowed in school, including energy drinks and chewing gum. We appear to have a growing number of students having these drinks for breakfast or bringing them into school. Chewing gum is also a perennial issue. Please can I ask that you ensure your children do not bring these items into school.

Key Dates

A full calendar is on the school website but please find a reminder of some key dates for this half term:

Monday 31 st October	INSET Day – School closed to students
W/C Tuesday 1 st November	Year 11 Mocks
Thursday 10 th November	Sixth Form Open Evening at STM
W/C Monday 14 th November	Year 13 Mocks
Tuesday 29 th November	Year 11 Mocks Results day
Thursday 1 st December	Year 7 parents Evening
Friday 9 th December	Year 10 reports to parents
Thursday 8 th December	Christmas Concert
Friday 11 th December	Year 8 reports to parents
Tuesday 13 th December	Prize Evening
Friday 16 th December	Interim Reports for Y7-9
Friday 16 th December	End of Term

I am looking forward to a positive and exciting academic year. Many thanks for your continued support

Yours sincerely

Mark Rayner
Headteacher