



Friday, 31 March 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

I hope this letter finds you well. As you will see from our Facebook page it's been another jammed packed term here at TSS. Head to our Facebook page (search The Sittingbourne School to find us) to learn about our Year 12s Work Experience, Science Week, World Book Day, our Year 8 & 9 girls basketball success, our Year 7 boys rugby success, Careers week and much, much more. If you haven't already, I highly recommend you check it out to get a real flavour of all the fantastic events and opportunities our students get to take part in here at the school.

Ofsted

As you will know, last week we were joined by six Ofsted inspectors to carry out a two day review. Sadly, I am unable to give you details of the outcomes of the inspection but I look forward to sharing their report with you once it is published next term. I would like to thank all the parents and carers who took the time to share their views via Ofsted's Parent View page. The feedback received was very positive overall. We know that not all of the other local secondary schools are lucky to have such positive parents and carers, so thank you for working with us as we continue to do all we can to provide every child with the very best education here at TSS.

Contact with the Pastoral Teams

One concern that has been raised previously is that parents and carers don't feel they are getting a timely response when they contact the school. One of the key factors here are parents/carers emails are getting lost amongst the large numbers of emails leaders receive every day from staff, the Swale Academies Trust, agencies and external providers - this is regularly around 100-150 a day. To address this we have spent the last few weeks devising a new system that will allow us to clearly identify communications from parents and carers to the pastoral teams and monitor the responses back. This system will be in place from Monday 17 April and will require you to fill in a contact form on the school website:

<https://www.thesittingbourneschool.org.uk/page/?title=Contact+Us&pid=2>

We politely ask that all parents and carers use this system when contacting their child's year team. Please avoid emailing Heads of Year and PSM directly as we will be unable to monitor

this and your message may get lost amongst other emails. We will continue to monitor and review this system and, if necessary, make changes.

Toilets

Over the last couple of weeks I have been contacted by several parents and also made aware of comments from parents/carers on Facebook that we have closed the toilets and students are not allowed to use them. I want to reassure you that this is not true. There are toilets open throughout the day for students to use. What has changed recently is that we have limited which toilets are open during lesson time and there is now a member of staff on duty by the toilets to check they are not being misused. Students are not turned away or denied access to the toilet, whether they have a toilet pass or not. For example, on Monday alone 158 students used the toilet during lesson times. Of those 158, 64 did not have toilet passes. By implementing this system it means that students who leave lessons just in order to avoid learning, meet up with their friends or vape in the toilets are now deterred. I have received several positive comments from students about how much nicer the toilets are now as they are not being misused. However, we will continue to monitor and review this situation to ensure that our systems support students who need the toilet whilst also have necessary procedures in place to ensure students are safe, deter anti-social behaviour and minimise disruptions to learning. Your support on this matter is greatly appreciated.

Summer uniform

I want to give parents and carers advance notice that in June and July we will be trialling a change to our school uniform policy. To allow students to be more comfortable during the warmer months, for the last term of the year only (5 June to 21 July) students will be permitted to wear shorts to school, should they wish. The shorts must be knee length, black and smart. Students often describe them as chino shorts. No other types of shorts, including sports shorts, cargo shorts, bermuda shorts or denim shorts will be permitted. We will send out further guidance nearer the time. All going well, and we aren't having to deal with too many alternatives being worn, then we will make this a permanent change for future years.

Drop off and pick up times

I would like to repeat my plea to all parents and carers who drive to drop off and pick up their children to please show consideration to our neighbours. We have had reports of parents/carers blocking roads, pathways and driveways or damaging grass verges whilst they wait in their cars which is causing a lot of concern for local residents. I appreciate that pick up and drop off times can be stressful, made all the worse by the traffic in the area, but I kindly ask that please think of others too. Can I also remind parents/carers that students need to be at their desk, ready to learn by 8.35am in the morning.

Facebook comments

As an experienced school leader and a parent myself, I understand the benefits of Facebook groups for parents/carers with children in the same school/class/year. They can be a useful source of information when someone doesn't know something, e.g. what homework is due, what day do students return from a holiday etc. However, recently I have been made aware of a few comments being made on parent groups that are at least unhelpful and at most inflammatory. Sadly, these comments are often the first we are hearing about an issue/incident. As we are not part of these groups, often the comments will be passed on by another parent/carer. By the time this happens, valuable time has been lost in dealing with the issue. If parents/carers contact us first, rather than taking to Facebook to air their concerns, we are able to deal with the problem much more efficiently. Frustratingly, these Facebook groups also give us no chance to reply and I would urge all parents/carers to remember that when issues arise in school there is more than one side to what has happened and that all TSS staff are hard working professionals who want what is best for every child in the school.

New caterers

As some of you will be aware, from 1st April we will be using a new catering company. We are really excited about working with Cuccina, who will be providing the food for students and staff in our canteen and food serveries. As those parents who came in for Year 9 and 11 parents evening can testify, the quality of the food will be of a high standard. Attached to this letter is an information pack from Cuccina for parents/carers to read. We will share the updated menus via our Facebook page as and when we get them.

I would like to end my letter by thanking all of the TSS staff for their hard work this term. We are very lucky to have such a talented and hard working group of teachers and support staff here, all contributing to the continuous journey of improvement the school is on.

Whatever you have planned, I hope you have a lovely Easter and a restful break.

Kind regards



Mr N Smith
Headteacher