

Dear Parents and Carers,



It has been wonderful to finally be back in school this term, back into routines, and students really making progress in their lessons. I thought it would be timely to share some key messages prior to the half term break, as well as some great good news stories that students have been participating in this term.

Go4Schools replaced by Classcharts

Our contract with Go4Schools will end this week and we have moved to a new and improved system called Classcharts. As staff get used to using the new platform and we work through the training modules we will not have the parent module open. This means for a short period of time you will not have the day to day information, but we look forward to launching Classcharts with you next academic year. We will then share with you how to access the new modules.

Staff only day

There will be a staff only day on Monday 21st June, this will replace the day advertised in our original school calendar.

Parents Evenings

Both Year 9 & 11 have been able to have Parents Evenings over this last term, and next term we'll have Year 10 and sixth form. We appreciate that parents evenings for Year 7 and Year 8 have been missed this year due to COVID restrictions, however, any parents wishing to speak with their child's teachers are able to email them direct to book a telephone call where questions can be answered.

College calendar

Next year's college calendar is now on our website with all term times. We return with familiarisation days from Thursday 2nd September.

Timetable Rollover

As we shared previously the timetable will be changing from after May Half Term. Students should return to College on Monday 7th June and line up in their current tutor groups and we will then issue new timetables in the tutor reading lesson. All students have a timetabled lesson on **Tuesday Week A until 15:55** and Year 10 and 11 also have a timetabled lesson on **Tuesday week B. We will return on Week B.** As with any timetable change and the appointment of new staff there may be some tutor groups/tutors that move around or swap. The standards and expectations for each year group remain the same.

False nails, false lashes, facial piercings!

Can we take this opportunity to remind students about the expectations on piercings, nails, eye lashes etc. Our policy says - no false nails, no bright nail varnish; natural make up (so no false lashes!), and no facial piercings. Students can wear one pair of stud earrings (not hoops), one ring, one watch. Please ensure that students can come to College on the first day in the correct attire meeting these requirements - they will have to remove any false nails, lashes, piercings and excessive jewellery.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A Frier'.

A Frier
Principal

Good News Stories

Positive Community Cards

What a fabulous launch of a Positive Community Card. Staff have been frantically signing cards as our students carry out positive acts supporting our community ethos. The cards recognise the students' positive behaviours in the areas of supporting others, taking initiative, holding a positive conversation and picking up litter, using good manners, and wearing their uniform smartly. Rewarding students positive behaviour is paramount to giving them a sense of belonging to our school and community. Over 6000 signatures have been received by our students in the last 3 weeks. Staff have loved engaging in positive conversations with students during their break and social times - it makes everyone smile!

Duke of Edinburgh Award

All DofE participants at SDCC have been involved in a wide range of training as they work towards completing the expedition sections of their awards. Training over the past month has covered:

- First aid and emergency procedures
- An awareness of risk and health and safety issues
- Navigation and route planning
- Campcraft, equipment and hygiene
- Food and cooking
- Countryside Code

Gold - All groups are excited as they are about to put the theory into practice as we commence the practical part of their Navigation and route planning training. Students will be taking part in two full days of navigation and hillwalking practice as well as a micro navigation competition. These will help to prepare them for their forthcoming expedition.

Silver

Our Silver participants had a whole year without training due to lockdowns, but luckily for them they managed to have all the seasons in their two practice walks! Rain, winds, dull skies, blue skies, sunshine and a bit more rain! But even the rain couldn't dampen the spirits of our 53 Silver participants. They navigated their way through Bere Peninsula and South Dartmoor, working in their groups in a mixture of urban and rural environments. Nothing but the highest standards were met with the highest spirits, no matter the challenges they faced (did we mention it rained?). Pupils displayed some key navigation skills as they made their way to our checkpoints, they always greeted us with smiles and sweets. The Yr 10's have all completed their first aid training and food and cooking lessons and are all set to embark on their practice expedition. We are also delighted to see so many Yr 11's who want to complete their awards and to gain some adventure before they leave. Great effort from everyone involved!



Bronze

36 Yr 9 Bronze participants braved the elements and took part in their practice expedition on the South West Coast path, in somewhat adverse weather conditions. Teams showed great team and leadership skills, navigating their teams towards check points and final destinations each day. All the students now have a greater appreciation for what constitutes a waterproof jacket, but there were smiles at the end of the two days as they put their dry kit on and cooked their hot meal!



Finally, a massive thank you to all the parents and carers of our awesome participants. Without your support and understanding we would not be able to run the Award.

Well done to our Newly Qualified Teachers

This year we have had five Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) who joined in September 2020. After a very unusual training year due to Covid 19 and lockdown, in a variety of schools in the South West, our five NQTS made a flying start to their teaching. As an NQT the training continues with a weekly professional development session as well as having a tutor group and teaching. All our NQTs are subject specialists and these are some of the challenges and highlights they have faced this year.



Mr Grasske is one of our Geography trainees and he writes “It’s been brilliant being an NQT here at Stoke Damerel, even with the challenges of the pandemic and lockdown learning. I have learnt so much from my colleagues and look forward to progressing my teaching even further!”

Miss Turner has been one of our science NQTs and she writes that “having a tutor group and doing guided reading was a new experience”. Her highlights this year include working collaboratively with a supportive department and filming science experiments in her kitchen during remote learning.



This image of Miss Evans who also teaches Geography, shows her litter picking with the Eco Club. She says it was the students themselves who were keen to do something. "We taught a plastic pollution unit during lockdown and it sparked a lot of interest, especially in Years 7 and 8. That is lovely to see. They are the next generation and have the biggest potential to make the difference." Miss Evans also writes "One of my key highlights is working with such an incredible team who are driven to inspire our young people, and I have learnt so much in a short space of time. A challenge has been adapting to the different teaching and learning platforms throughout the coronavirus pandemic."



Dr Roberts highlights from the NQT year have included building positive relationships with all her students. Dr Roberts writes that she was very proud when she successfully led a whole school best practice session and won the most improved group within the Science Faculty for students completing 100 Tassomai questions in May.



Six Stoke Damerel CCF cadets promoted

2021 is proving to be a very successful and busy year for the SDCC Combined Cadet Force, which is no mean feat during a worldwide pandemic. The CCF currently has its highest membership ever. The success of the group is reflected in the recent number of promotions. CCF and Outdoor Education leader Steve Chapman said, 'Last week 6 of the SDCC cadets were all promoted. We are particularly proud of Year 12 student Cassie who is the highest ranking Senior Cadet in the Army section at Sergeant.'

The action isn't limited to the school week. Mr Chapman went on to say 'This weekend we had our first exercise in 15 months' - 'Exercise Manadon Marauder' - which involved 32 Plymouth College and Stoke Damerel students. It was great to see our students leading the way with their dedication and commitment'.

Cadets took part in a range of activities including: Patrol Skills, Pairs fire and maneuver, Fire Control orders as well as some enjoyable 'bushcraft skills'. Next up is Summer Camp 2021.



Year 11 Speaking and Listening Assessments

Two weeks ago, the English department was abuzz with drama: not because of any of the latest government announcements, but because the annual speaking and listening assessments had been introduced to Year 11!

In previous years, we would hear individual presentations from students. However, this year required something new - and almost revolutionary - in order to engage students and enable them to achieve their potential. Enter Netflix, stage left: we set the students the task of embodying various historical figures, and characters, from *An Inspector Calls*, in order to address the question 'who is to blame for the fate of Eva Smith and those like her?' for a fictional Netflix documentary of the same name.



We were absolutely blown away by the quality of the work - to hear Nye Bevan and Winston Churchill brought to life by our students was incredible. They had gone to great lengths to investigate and characterise these individuals, even going so far as to parody their voices. We have been so proud of the efforts of our Y11 groups over the past eighteen months, as they have faced the trials of lockdown and TAGs, and this was, very much, the icing on the cake for us. It was a wonderful way to end the academic year, and their journey in English at SDCC.

Resilience pays off

We have been heartened by the amazing resilience shown by our students over this last academic year. Coming back into school after a long period of time the students adjusted quickly to the systems put in place to keep them safe and the new initiatives to maximise learning time within the school. Students are now equipped, ready to learn and this is checked in the morning to prevent barriers to learning throughout the day. Our year group assemblies and our morning line ups encapsulates the absolutely amazing students we have at SDCC. Everyday our students make us smile and that is worth coming into work for!

Year 13 - Despite the issues that have clouded the past year of studies they have all shown immense resilience and fortitude and have coped with whatever has come their way admirably. Whether the learning has been virtual or face to face, the same high level of effort has been evident.

As they move towards the end of their time at Stoke Damerel students have also focussed on life after Sixth Form. There are 37 with an application to university currently underway. Of these a number have already made their firm choice with destinations such as Bristol and London included. Some are choosing to stay closer to home with Exeter, Plymouth and Marjons proving popular. Courses as wide ranging as Law, Biomedicine, Photography and Sports Science are on the list. Other students have had interviews for apprenticeships at employers such as Babcock and DSTL and those who are yet to decide have taken advantage of the excellent careers advice available at Stoke Damerel Community College.

Whilst it is with a tinge of sadness that we will say goodbye to the Year group it is with immense pride that we wish them good luck as they embark upon the next stage of their lives.

Year 11 - It has been a very turbulent year for Year 11. Returning after the first lockdown and diving straight into Year 11. They have shown true resilience and adapted to the ever changing situation that they have found themselves in. Students approached their December mock examinations with maturity and full focus. For all this was the first time they had sat exams in a formal setting, their attitude was exemplary.

January brought new challenges as students learnt online and were unsure whether they would be sitting traditional exams in the Summer. They took this in their stride and adapted to the new method of assessment and how their final grades would be awarded. Alongside this they have been making some tough decisions about what they were going to do next, would it be Sixth Form or City College, or an apprenticeship.

It has been an extremely stressful time for all Year 11 students but the finish line is in sight, they should be proud of themselves. And finally they will get the right of passage as they celebrate at the Prom in July!!