



3rd September 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that this letter finds you well and you have enjoyed a relaxing summer. I wanted to take this opportunity to write to all parents in preparation for the new academic year.

Year 11 Results

I want to start by congratulating our outgoing Year 11 students on an excellent set of examination results. For a second successive year, we have seen our students achieve record results for our school, which this year have been achieved despite the more challenging grade boundaries which have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Our Year 11 results this year will place us as one of the most improved schools in the country when compared with the outcomes in 2019, which is a quite remarkable feat and one which reflects the progress we have made over the past four years. I have been deeply impressed by the manner in which students and staff have embraced the journey we have been on since I took up the position of Headteacher in January 2020 and these results are undoubtedly the product of the hard work of our school community. Finally, it is pleasing to see our students move onto their next stage of education and embark on sixth form courses, apprenticeships and many other blended courses. Please remember that we are always here to support and advise if you still require our input and we very much look forward to seeing many of you at our Year 11 Presentation Evening in the autumn; more details will follow in the coming weeks regarding this celebration.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete

I am sure that you will have seen the news in the past week regarding the alarming information regarding RAAC. This particular type of concrete has been found in a number of school buildings and has resulted in a number of having to close or amend their start to term. Since hearing this news, I have worked extensively with our site team to ensure that this particular type of concrete is not something that is found in our school to the extent that we would be forced to make safety amendments in preparation for the new term I am glad to report that a number of site assessments, analysis of our capital building records and discussions with the Department for Education, have confirmed that we do not have RAAC in our school and as such, the start of the new academic year can start as planned. We will, of course, monitor the situation in the coming weeks and will continue to always place our student's safety as the most important priority in everything we do.

Start of Term

I am very much looking forward to seeing our students return to school next week. Please remember that our Year 7 and 11 students will start the new academic year on Tuesday 5th September at 8.40am, whilst Years 8, 9 and 10 will return to school on Wednesday 6th September at 8.40am.

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Charlton Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5PF T: 01749 345555 e-mail: whitstone@educ.somerset.gov.uk www.whitstoneschool.org

All students will be met by members of staff at the school gates and directed to the correct place for them to start the academic year. On their first day back in school, students will receive their timetables and information relating to the new academic year. Should you have any questions before your child returns to school, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Uniform

We are very aware of the current financial challenges facing parents and carers in sending their children to school and the particular costs of school uniform. With this in mind, we are always searching for ways to reduce the cost of our school uniform, whilst continuing to welcome smartly dressed students to school each day. To provide parents/carers with more choice and, as a result, reduce the cost of school uniform, we have made the decision that students are welcome to wear a greater range of school shoes. With effect from the start of this academic year, students may wear any shoes to school that are 'black and polishable'. This decision is to take into account the number of shoes found in shops which were sold as 'school shoes' but did not always conform to our uniform expectations. Please be aware that canvas trainers and plimsolls are still not acceptable however, we hope that the greater range of shoes allowed in school will ease the pressure on some parents/carers. Should you wish to check your child's shoes in preparation for the start of term, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please be aware that there have been no other changes to our uniform expectations.

Pastoral Communication

Before the start of the summer break, I wrote to inform you of exciting new changes to our pastoral structure. The start of this academic year will see our students become fully part of one of our new school Houses, with each House led by a 'House Leader' and supported by a non-teaching 'Deputy House Leader'. Our new pastoral structure has greatly increased our capacity to support students and will speed up our communication with parents/carers even more. Please could I ask that you note the staff and their roles below to enable you to contact the most suitable person in school.

Mr Cleave - Peregrine House Leader/Mrs Evans – Peregrine Deputy House Leader

Miss Miell - Kestrel House Leader/Miss Jones – Kestrel Deputy House Leader

Mr Grant – Buzzard House Leader/Mrs Langley – Buzzard Deputy House Leader

Mrs Latham – Kite House Leader/Mrs Millward – Kite Deputy House Leader

I look forward to seeing our students return at the start of next week and seeing parents, carers and families in the coming months. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at guy.swallow@whitstoneschool.org.

Yours faithfully

Guy Swallow
Headteacher