

20 November 2015

Dear Parents and Carers:

It has been an especially busy start to the academic year and Christmas is now almost upon us. There have been many significant developments for the school, both locally and nationally and so I am writing to keep you updated.

Exam results

I was delighted with our students' results this summer, in both GCSEs and A levels. Our positive trend of improvement continued at GCSE, with 67% of students gaining 5 A*-C grades, including English and Maths. In English, 78% of students were awarded a C grade or better; and in Maths the figure was identical, at 78%. There was also a record number of A* and A grades. All key measures of performance, including the proportion of students making 'expected progress' and 'above expected progress' in the core subjects, were above national levels (significantly above in almost all cases).

Chase Terrace is one of only seven schools in Staffordshire with GCSE performance that is stronger than national norms for all key indicators, and the only school across the Lichfield and Cannock districts with this profile.

At A Level, our profile strengthened further, with a 98% pass rate, 73% of entries being graded 'C' or above, 48% at 'B' or above and 30% at 'A' or 'A*'.

Vocational Skills Centre

You may be aware that we have a £2.5 million building on our site that was opened in January 2011. This was a County Council funded development to provide vocational courses in Hair and Beauty, Trowel Trades and Engineering for students from the five secondary schools in the Lichfield and Burntwood District. A Partnership Board was set up, with representation from the five schools, and the teaching was provided by South Staffordshire College staff.

Subsequently, various changes in Government policy resulted in a situation where the courses were less and less viable and these difficulties were compounded by limitations in the role that South Staffordshire College was able to play. In early 2014, the Partnership Board served notice to the County Council that it was no longer able to run the facility effectively. Some months later, the County Council requested expressions of interest from parties interested in taking over the running of the Centre. We submitted a bid ourselves but, in the first instance, an alternative proposal was favoured (on the grounds that there would be more potential benefits (including cost benefits) for the County Council). However, after twelve months, the alternative project had failed to make progress and we were approached. I am therefore delighted to inform you that an agreement has now been brokered for the school to take on the building for its own use. Our plan is to relocate the Design and Technology Department over to the new building and also to extend our sixth form offer to include a new level 3 BTEC Engineering course, taught by our own staff (two have engineering degrees and several others have closely related qualifications). The accommodation is absolutely outstanding, so we are very excited about having this fantastic new facility for our own use. We are also in the process of engaging local employers in plans for the delivery of the course, work experience placements and linked apprenticeships. There has already been a very encouraging level of interest. Engineering is a key growth employment sector, especially in this area, so is an ideal opportunity to create really strong career progression routes for many of our students.

Sixth Form Curriculum

From this September, students starting in our sixth form have had to meet revised entrance requirements. Where previously, 5 GCSEs at grade 'C' or above was the requirement, students are now required to get a 'C' grade average over their best 8 qualifications. The basic expectation now is that students study a programme that comprises three A level/BTEC courses. Students with a 'B' grade average have been able, if they wish, to supplement their programme with an extra AS in Maths; 'A' grade students have been able to select four courses. The rationale for this is that most students will be better served by putting their efforts into fewer courses and maximising their chances of getting high grades, rather than achieving slightly weaker grades over a greater number of qualifications. It is worth noting that universities make offers on the basis of performance in three A levels.

Given that the assessment of AS / A level courses has now changed, such that AS achievement after one year can no longer count towards a full A level gained over a two-year period, we also made the decision that our courses will now all be two-year courses. In other words, students need to commit to continue with each course they study for the full two years, a change to past arrangements when students would typically start with four courses and then drop down to three after year 12.

For September 2016, as discussed in the section above ('Vocational Skills Centre'), we are offering a new BTEC Level 3 course in Engineering. Some students (with at least a grade B in Maths) will wish to combine this with AS or A level Maths and other courses in order to provide them with a Technical Baccalaureate combination, which is considered an ideal preparation for intermediate and higher level apprenticeships. Others, with a grade 'A' GCSE average and an interest in Engineering or related careers, will find this a good, more practically orientated complement to three A level courses and a strong foundation for university entry.

A sixth form prospectus, course booklet and application form can be downloaded from our website or hard copies can be collected from the Sixth Form Reception. The first deadline for applications is 11 December '15.

Stephen Sutton

We now have a concrete table tennis table in the school grounds, as a result of the fund-raising efforts of local resident, Brian Watkins, of Burntwood Table Tennis Club, and a contribution from the Table Tennis UK. Brian has raised funds for the Teenage Cancer Trust and has also been instrumental in gaining funds for a concrete table for Burntwood Leisure Centre, as well as the one for the school. The tables, which cost over £1K each, bear the inscription 'Let Stephen Inspire You'. Stephen was a keen table tennis player and a member of Brian's club. Our table is getting lots of use during break and lunch periods.

I am also pleased to report that we now also have an extra covered canopy area in the grounds, providing extra outdoor seating for students. The canopy was designed by Harry Hawkesford, previously a CTTC student, who is doing an apprenticeship with local design and engineering firm, RMD Kwikform. The side panels feature images of Stephen and some of his inspiring words. The firm very generously erected the canopy at no cost to the school. It provides us with another reminder of the powerful influence that Stephen had on our lives and the example that he left for us.

Lower School Presentation Evening

Last month, our annual Lower School Presentation Evening took place. One again, this was a wonderful occasion, organised by Miss Hayburn (Assistant Head – Student Support), with many students recognised for their excellent achievements through years 7, 8 and 9. There were subject-based awards, tutor group recognition and trophies for overall achievement. Mr Tennant, the school’s Gifted and Talented Coordinator, also gave a presentation on the broad range of students’ extra-curricular achievements, including several national standard competitors. The event culminated in the presentation of the Stephen Sutton Award and this year there were two (joint) winners: Josh Lowndes and Joe Edwards, who were chosen on the grounds of their ‘drive to succeed’, their ‘drive to inspire’ and their ‘drive to support’. The awards were presented by Lee Woodall, a good friend of Stephen Sutton’s, who continues to raise large amounts of money for the Teenage Cancer Trust. You can view the list of prize winners and their profiles in the ‘Student Success’ area of our website.

E-cigarettes

A brief word about e-cigarettes ... We have taken the same stance that most schools have taken on e-cigarettes, which is to treat their possession and use in the same way as we do for cigarettes. We have no tolerance at all of smoking in any form and using, or being found in possession of, e-cigarettes results in a fixed-term exclusion.

Aerosols

We do not like students to bring aerosols on to the school site. Whilst I appreciate that students may prefer to use an aerosol antiperspirant (especially after PE lessons), rather than the roll-on variety, aerosol spray can cause real difficulties for asthma sufferers and can be hazardous (as an inflammable substance). We have also discovered that aerosol spray can activate our fire alarms and although steps have been taken to reduce the likelihood of this, there is still some potential for this to happen. For these reasons, we have now banned aerosols from the site. Anyone seen with one in their possession will have it confiscated (for collection by parents) and repeat offenders will be subject to appropriate sanctions.

Forthcoming events

Thu. 26 Nov. '15	Year 13 Parents' Evening
Wed. 9 Dec. '15	Year 12 Parents' Evening
Mon. 14 Dec. '15 – Fri. 8 Jan '16	Year 13: Revision and Assessment Period
Tue. 15 Dec. '15	Winter Showcase (7pm.)
Thu. 17 Dec. '15	Reunion Evening (7 pm) (ex- Yr. 11, Yr. 13 students)
Fri. 18 Dec. '15	<i>Last day of Autumn Term; Yrs. 7-10 reports to parents</i>
Mon. 4 Jan. '16	<i>First day of Spring Term</i>
Mon. 14 Dec. '15 – Fri. 16 Jan. '16	Year 13: Revision and Assessment Period
Fri. 15 Jan. '16	Year 11 - reports to parents
Wed. 20 Jan. '16	Year 11 Parents' Evening
Mon. 25 Jan. '16 – Fri. 5 Feb. '16	Year 12: Revision and Assessment Period
Fri. 29 Jan. '16	Year 13 – reports to parents
Mon. 1 Feb. – Tue. 9 Feb. '16	KS4 options assemblies
Tue. 2 Feb. '16	Year 9 Parents' Evening
Wed. 10 Feb. '16	KS4 Options Evening (6-9pm)
Fri. 12 – Sat. 20 Feb. '16	Ski Trip

Snow closures

We will always make every effort to open the school whenever it is safe to do so, taking into account the conditions on the school site and the local roads. If we do need to take the decision to close, this will generally be done before 7am, with a text being sent out to all parents and a message being posted on our website.

Last day of term

As usual, we will be finishing at 12.30 pm on Friday 18 December, for the Christmas break. Lunch will be available in the Canteen from 12.30 to 1 pm.

Best wishes

Stuart Jones
Headteacher