

Dear Parents & Carers,

“There are decades when nothing happens; and there are weeks when decades happen”
(Vladimir Lenin)

It has certainly been a monumental first week back at school with the country having had two Heads of State and two Prime Ministers. Undoubtedly the death of the Queen Elizabeth II will overshadow even the formation of our new government and the funeral of Mikhail Gorbachev in the news agenda. The Queen’s dignity and unswerving sense of duty over the last seventy years are an example to us all. The Queen has provided stability and been a reassuring presence through many turbulent times and we pay tribute to her and send our deepest sympathies to her family. Bereavement is traumatic for any family but the loss of the Queen, who was held in such deep affection, will be felt far and wide. We are currently awaiting further information regarding national commemorations.

These events have somewhat overshadowed what has been a very successful first week of the academic year. It has been a really encouraging summer for us as a school with A Level and GCSE students performing very well and record numbers of new students joining the school. Congratulations to the 330 Year 7 students who have settled in extremely well, as have our new Sixth Formers and all the new students who have joined us in other year groups. Indeed, we now have approx. 1,750 students on roll for the first time ever as our excellent reputation continues to grow.

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Hopefully this will be the first academic year since 2018-19 without coronavirus having a significant impact on our daily operations. As such, it is time to return to our regular expectations when it comes to attendance. **Students are expected to be on site by 8.45am every day.**

At the risk of stating the obvious, if students are not in lessons they are likely to be disadvantaged! We need to work together in order to significantly reduce the amount of learning lost through absence. **If youngsters are struggling and feeling under the weather, please give them some appropriate medication and send them into school**, rather than allowing them to stay at home. Similarly, we will be encouraging them to remain in lessons during the day. Please note that Persistent Absence is defined as individual attendance falling below 90% and students falling below this level will be referred to Warwickshire’s Attendance, Compliance & Enforcement Service (ACE).

The obvious reason for this is the **direct correlation between attendance and achievement** which was reinforced by analysis of our own examination results this summer showing just how missing school significantly reduces the chances of students achieving good examination grades: Those whose attendance was above 96% were over twice as likely to achieve Grades 9 - 5 compared to those whose attendance was below 90%! Attending school every day really does make a difference.

In the event that your child is unavoidably absent from school, they are still expected to complete the work they are missing. Details of this 'Work when Absent' are available on Microsoft Teams.

DISCRETIONARY EFFORT MATTERS:

It is really important that students display discretionary effort and 'go the extra mile' in lessons, with homework and through their extracurricular involvement. Homework is mandatory, and not doing it will result in students being placed in detention where they will complete the homework supported by staff. We look forward to hundreds of students going above and beyond by attending either Stratford Scholars, Aim Higher, Grade Booster, National Tutoring Programme sessions or some of the other extracurricular activities at school. **Our message is a simple one; the more you put in, the more you get out.**

We are continuing with our 'Attitude to Learning' grades which are entered every lesson. This helps motivate students and improves home-school communication by ensuring that parents are aware on a daily basis of excellent or poor performance during lessons. Two positives will be issued for Grade 1 ('Excellent lesson') and one positive for a Grade 2 ('Good' lesson), with the default being a '3' representing 'sufficient work'. Parents will continue to receive a daily automated message whenever a student has a lesson that exceeds or falls short of our expectations. Please note that a 4 will be issued for insufficient effort/work and a 5 for disruptive behaviour. **Students who receive a grade 4 or 5 during a lesson will automatically be kept behind for 10 minutes by their form tutor.** This should reinforce the importance of working hard and completing work in lessons by providing a same-day response:

Mark	Description	Outcome
1	Excellent Lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly proactive approach to work Student is polite, well behaved and helps to produce a positive learning environment Student is fully engaged in lesson, notably exceeding core expectations 	Logged as a positive – 'Excellent Lesson' (2 points)
2	Good Lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive approach to work Student is polite and well behaved Student uses time productively within the lesson to exceed core expectations 	Logged as a positive – 'Good Lesson'
3	Sufficient work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student meets core expectations of work and attitude to learning with limited prompting or reminding. Work is sufficient to achieve core objectives to an acceptable target level standard. 	Nothing
4	Insufficient work in lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient engagement with/attitude towards the lesson – needs multiple reminders to complete work set Work below expected quantity and/or quality This may include long periods of limited engagement then a rushed completion at end of lesson 	Logged as a negative 10 minute stay behind at end of tutor time
5	Poor behaviour in lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student's behaviour impacts the learning of self and/or others Student demonstrates a lack of respect to others (staff or student) Repeated reminders and earlier warnings not acted on by student 	Logged as a negative 10 minute stay behind at end of tutor time

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

As well as these regular electronic communications, please log onto **My Child at School and check/sign the student planner weekly** to ensure you are aware of other key information. You will also receive a weekly email outlining details of homework that has been set via Teams.

I would ask you to build a relationship with your child's tutor as the first point of contact, though individual teaching staff may be contacted directly by their initialsurname@stratfordschool.co.uk e.g. nwallace@stratfordschool.co.uk.

OPEN EVENING EARLY CLOSURES

Please note that we will be closing early for our **Year 6 Open Evening on Wednesday 21st September** from 4-7pm. Many of our current students will be present to help out on the evening and in order to prepare for the evening, we will be **closing at 1.15pm** on that day. We will also be closing early for our **Sixth Form Open Evening on Wednesday 16th November at 1.15pm**. A lunch service will still be available on those days. However, school buses will remain at their normal time on these days. If you wish your child to remain in school until 3.10pm please inform their form tutor so that we can make alternative arrangements.

UNIFORM

We would also appreciate your support in ensuring that students come to school in the **correct uniform** throughout the year, with **names clearly marked on all garments**. On days when students have PE or Dance they must come into school in their PE kit which they will remain in all day. Please note that students are **not permitted to wear sweatshirts or hoodies**; Students are expected to have the school quarter zip top as part of their PE kit. If they do not, then they will need to wear their blazer over the top of their PE t-shirt. **The school quarter zip top may also double up as a school jumper** when wearing regular uniform if an additional layer is required underneath the blazer.

Facial piercings and false nails are not permitted. These can potentially cause a serious problem for us in school. As times have changed these may have become the norm for some people. However, perceived norm or not, they are not allowed in school (or many other work places) for obvious safety reasons. We had multiple students taken to A&E over the last 12 months for very painful ripped off finger nails when they were caught by a ball or in the strap of another students bag. Facial piercings may have gone unnoticed for some time when students were all wearing masks but that is not the case any more. **It would be great to have these sorted over the weekend so we can avoid unnecessary confrontation with staff**, particularly in practical subjects, where there may be more of a risk of injury.

We expect students to be proud of their school and dress accordingly. If you are in any doubt about uniform requirements, full details are on the website under the 'school information' tab. By wearing full school uniform day after day students show that they buy into the ethos of the school and this removes unnecessary arguments and barriers to learning.

In the meantime, we look forward to working closely together to ensure that your daughter/son has a safe, happy and successful academic year. Please follow us on twitter [@StrUponAvonSch](https://twitter.com/StrUponAvonSch) or check the school website www.stratforduponavonschool.com for regular updates. Thank you for your ongoing understanding and support,

Yours faithfully,



Mr Neil Wallace
Headteacher