

Headteacher's Update – Friday 8th September 2023



Dear Parents/Carers

Reflection

In my first update of the academic year, I am pleased to share with you our new start of lesson prayer. Pupils and staff will say this prayer together at the beginning of every lesson, as we focus this year on becoming a more prayerful community that is devoted to our Catholic faith and our Saint Bede's family.

*Holy Spirit, true source of light and fountain of wisdom.
Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion.
This I ask through Christ Our Lord.
Amen*

Thank You

It has been lovely to welcome our pupils back to school for what has been a successful first week. Thank you for your support in achieving this.

Our new 'BEDE' ethos (Behaviour, Engagement, Devotion and Excellence) has been at the heart of all aspects of the school day. Year 7 pupils have adapted very quickly to the differing routines of secondary school life. Year 11 have, as I knew they would, acted as exemplary ambassadors for the school and role models for our younger pupils. Our 'line-up' routine has allowed for a settled start to the day, ensured punctuality to lesson and kept our busy corridors as calm, orderly and safe as possible. We are becoming a more prayerful community by beginning every single lesson in prayer. Standards of uniform and appearance have been exceptionally high, and I am particularly grateful to pupils for meeting our new expectations regarding jewellery without fuss. Pupils have adapted to the slightly earlier start to the school day well – with the various roadworks in our local area not causing quite as much disruption as we feared!

Attendance update

Whole-school attendance this week: 97%

We know that maintaining a high level of attendance at school is vital for the health, wellbeing and life chances of children and young people. Thank you for your support with our focus on attendance last year, which ensured that the average attendance in each of the current Years 8-11 was significantly above the national average. In our introductory assemblies this week, I shared with pupils that in last year's Saint Bede's Year 11, pupils with an attendance level of above 95% achieved an average of **2 to 3 grades higher in every GCSE subject** compared to those who had an attendance level of below 90%.

We recognise that it can sometimes be difficult for parents/carers to judge whether their child is well enough to attend school, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The NHS advises that it is usually appropriate for children to attend school with a mild respiratory illness – the 'bugs' that are particularly common in the winter months. This would include general cold symptoms such as a minor cough, runny nose, or sore throat.

The NHS has produced a document to help parents/carers decide whether their child should continue to attend school if they are being affected by a range of symptoms and illnesses. The guidance is available via the link below. We hope you find this helpful.

[NHS – Is my child too ill for school?](#)

Staffing Update

At the beginning the academic year we have been delighted to welcome four new colleagues to our teaching staff:

Miss A England – Teacher of English
Miss L Finley – Teacher of RE
Mrs G Newson – Teacher of PE
Mrs J Walker – Assistant Head of English

A number of existing staff have also begun new roles:

Mrs A Abberley - Associate Assistant Headteacher (SENCO)
Miss O Bowers – Head of Year 7
Mr R Coleman – Head of History
Miss R Dixon – Head of Year 10
Mrs H Holmes - Associate Assistant Headteacher (Personal Development)
Mrs N Kelly – Assistant Head of Year 10
Mrs S Kelly – School Manager
Miss H Newsham - Associate Assistant Headteacher (RE & Catholic Life)
Mrs R Smith – Assistant Headteacher (Teaching and Learning)

In addition, Mr Langley (Assistant Headteacher) has kindly agreed to take on the privilege and responsibility of supporting our wonderful Year 11 cohort through their final year at Saint Bede's as their Head of Year, in addition to his existing responsibilities for whole-school behaviour and attendance.

Year 7 Retreat Day & Mass of Welcome

On Wednesday 13th September, Year 7 will be spending the day with the RE department in the first of our year group retreat days. This will include Father John leading our traditional Mass of Welcome, which will take place in the school hall at 2pm. If any parents/carers or family members would like to join us for Mass, you would be very welcome to do so from 1.45pm.

Parent Information Evenings

Thank you to parents/carers of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils who joined us for our start of year information evenings this week. We hope you found the sessions useful and invite your feedback via the survey which will be issued separately.

On Wednesday 13th September, we look forward to seeing Year 8 and Year 9 parents/carers for their sessions. The Year 8 event will commence at 6.00pm and the Year 9 event will commence at 7.15pm. Please see the letter issued separately for further details.

School Production 2024 – The Lion King

Hakuna Matata! Following the enormous success of last year's production of 'Narnia,' we are delighted to announce that this year's musical will be 'The Lion King.' All pupils from Years 7-11 are invited to be involved.

There will be an introductory workshop on Monday 18th September in the hall from 3.30-4.30pm. This workshop is for anyone who thinks they may be interested in performing, designing, or helping backstage. Pupils will learn the audition song, which will be taught by our producer Anthony Roberts, and audition pieces will be handed out and discussed. Formal auditions will be held in the hall on Monday 25th September from 3.30pm onwards. Please do encourage your child to go along to the workshop and find out more.

Summer e-mail issues - update

During the summer holiday, a member of staff reported that they had been the victim of a 'phishing' attack on their school email account. The attacker had used the account to send out phishing emails to the member of staff's contacts. The member of staff also reported other suspicious activity on their account that meant they were unable to receive emails. As the member of staff acted quickly to report the issue, we were able to block the account whilst we investigated the issue further.

As required in these circumstances, the incident has been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). In addition to the member of staff's own contacts, other email contacts of the school, including parents, pupils and staff, were swiftly notified of the issue, and given advice on how to deal with any suspicious emails they received. The school liaised with Microsoft and Lancashire Education Digital Services to contain and monitor the incident.

As a precautionary measure, and based on the advice we received from Microsoft, pupil accounts were suspended for the rest of the summer holidays to aid this process. To date, no reports of any adverse impact from the phishing attack have been identified or received.

'Grassroots' bullying and conflict reduction programme

This year Saint Bede's is taking part in a workshop-based programme called 'Grassroots', which is designed to reduce incidents of conflict and bullying between young people. This scheme has previously been successfully piloted in the USA, and participating schools saw a 60% reduction of conflict between children. The trial is now moving to the UK, and we are delighted that Saint Bede's has been given the opportunity to participate.

Please see the letter sent to all parents/carers of pupils in Year 7-9 with further details about what the programme will involve.

Online Safety newsletter

With this week's update we are also issuing our September Online Safety update. This will be issued monthly and will contain up-to-date advice on how to keep your child safe in the ever-changing online world. We hope you find this useful.

Class Charts

As you will be aware, Class Charts is the platform we use to communicate with parents and carers regarding attendance, behaviour and achievements. It is expected that all parents/carers have activated their Class Charts account and access it regularly. Should you experience any difficulty activating or using your Class Charts account, please contact remotesupport@stbedeslytham.lancs.sch.uk.

Have a lovely weekend.

Mr P Marsden
Headteacher