

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE : HEADTEACHERS SCHOOL NEWS BULLETIN – MAY 2022

I hope this end-of-month bulletin finds you and your families well. To complement our increasing social media presence, I will be writing at the end of each month to update you on what we have been doing at Ratton School recently, and to signpost you to some important dates coming up on the calendar. Hopefully, you have taken the opportunity to engage with our social card and have seen how busy life at school has been over the last term. It was a short and intense term for us all with lots of activity.

A return to GCSE Examinations

Firstly, I would like to commend our Year 11 students for the mature and sensible manner they have gone about tackling their GCSE exams. As you will know, after two years of disruption we have returned to GCSE exams this year as a national method of measuring attainment. Ms Hankin, our exams officer, and Mr Welsh our senior leader who oversees external exams, have been full of praise for the calm approach our Year 11 students have taken. I think the earlier mock exams in Year 11 have gone a long way to introducing students to the demands of an exam period and given them confidence for these challenging few weeks. We are looking forward to celebrating a positive set of GCSE results this summer with our students. Year 10 also sat a set of mocks prior to the GCSEs commencing and have also impressed us with their effort and willingness to apply their learning.

Sporting Success

The last week of term was a busy one for the year 7 athletes. A squad went to Lewes for an Eastbourne and District event. Seven schools were represented, and we held our heads high, securing a 3rd place finish. Very respectable result in their first secondary school event, and well placed for further success and development in future years.

We have had enormous success this year and another squad had already won through to the Sussex Schools Indoor Athletics finals. Ratton's team had won a regional tournament before Christmas to gain entry to this prestigious event. This year it was held in Bognor Regis. Eight regions across the county, from Hastings, to Crawley, Chichester to Crowborough sent over teams. Ratton was representing the Eastbourne and Hailsham area. We came fourth overall, effectively fourth across all the secondary schools in East and West Sussex. A marvelous effort all round.

Our Year 9 and Year 10 boys' football teams both won their respective cup competitions demonstrating the footballing strength in depth we have here at Ratton – well done to both teams.

Finally, our students are having a massive community impact as Sports Leaders, particularly in Years 8 and 9. Over the last few months both the year 8 & 9 sports leaders have delivered events to over 600 Primary school children enabling the local Primary schools to get back into competitive and enrichment sporting events for their children. You can follow these events on our social media page (*links available through our website or, via our 'Social Card' released by Lucie Hamblin, PR/Comms Lead, each month*).

Ratton school is really making an impact on sports at local Primary level. The students involved demonstrate their own personal development as they take on leadership and coaching roles and contribute to the sporting and personal development of their younger peers. We are proud that they are

growing into confident and caring students playing a positive role in the community. Thanks to the PE team here at Ratton for supporting our students and providing an overview of the activities held last term.

Personal Development

Our new student leaders in Year 10 have been meeting regularly with Mrs Chilvers and getting their work underway. Earlier this term the Student Leaders working on equalities and discrimination presented an excellent presentation on the theme of discrimination and protected characteristics which was very well received by their peers. Our 48 student leaders in Year 10 have split into smaller groups to work on themes such as mental health, sport, and diversity over the coming year, and we look forward to them having a big impact on school life.

We have offered Year 8 a series of workplace visits this term which have been well attended. Students have visited the Lansdowne hotel and Drusilla's' zoo. Both venues commended our students on their attitude and behaviour when on site. We have more visits coming up this term. Thanks to the careers team for their work here.

Attendance Update

I'd like to take the opportunity to highlight attendance and thank you for your support this year. Our cumulative attendance for the year stands at just over 94% at present and I'd like to thank parents and carers for their role in supporting us by ensuring that our students regularly attend school. We have faced a challenging year with Covid, but our attendance remains high compared to the majority of other schools in East Sussex and the national average attendance at secondary schools so far this year. As well as your invaluable support, I'd like to thank the attendance and pastoral teams' work in supporting good attendance. Remember, good attendance for an individual student is 95% or better. Good attendance moving to 100% attendance, means better GCSE grades, more choice of training, university or career and research shows higher earnings over a lifetime. This is a message we regularly share with students at school. Please do keep helping us to support your child's learning by getting them into school every day.

Staying with attendance, I would respectfully and politely remind all parents and carers that holidays are not permitted in term time. Government guidance states that we are no longer able to authorise any requests for children to be taken out of school unless there are exceptional circumstances (and family holidays/trips do not fall into this category). I know it is difficult when holiday prices rise during school holidays, and with the current pressures with the cost of living rising, but we have a duty to follow this guidance.

The consequence of your child taking an absence/holiday during term time is that it will be recorded as unauthorised and that we may request a Penalty Notice to be issued by the local authority to each parent/carer for each child should the child be absent during the requested period.

Please note that if a Penalty Notice is issued, this will be to each parent (for each child) incurring a fine of £120.00 which decreases to £60.00 if paid within 21 days.

The Importance of Reading

You would expect me to say as a teacher that reading is incredibly important, and of course you would be right. Post pandemic it has become even more important as our young people did not have the time in school with teachers physically to work on their reading, particularly in what we call tier 2 and tier 3

language: specialized vocabulary that is key to skillful writing and sound subject knowledge. We are launching a new strategy here at Ratton. A simple strategy made up of what to do BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER reading, which teachers will be using in their lessons. This is about linking and predicting before reading, identifying key vocabulary during reading, and reading with purpose, and after reading by summarising and concluding. Please do talk to your child about reading, what they are reading and why, and how they can link it to other knowledge they have learnt previously. Literacy unlocks doors and transports students into other worlds and times to help them understand the richness of human experience.

Please encourage your child to read a book, magazine or any text or visit our library at school.

Upcoming key dates

Finally, a couple of dates to be aware of. Firstly, as previously advised, we have early closure today (Monday 6th of June), for staff professional development. School will close to all students at 1.30pm and the school bus will not be available. Secondly, we have Year 11 valediction on Friday 17th June. School will close for years 7-10 at 12.30pm. This will allow us to say farewell to our Year 11 students whose pivotal years at Ratton have been so affected and disrupted by the pandemic.

Thank you for all your support last term, it has been appreciated. I hope you have managed to spend some quality time with your loved ones over the last week and enjoyed the jubilee celebrations over the course of the long weekend.

June 'School News' update (together with Headteachers Bulletin) will be released at the beginning of July.

Best wishes,

Gavin Peevers
Headteacher