

HEADTEACHER'S BULLETIN

March 2024 Edition

Dear Ratton Parents/Carers,

I hope this edition of the bulletin finds you well. As we approach the Easter holiday, I wish you and your families some quality downtime over the holiday period, and hopefully we start to see the advent of some genuine spring weather.

This term at Ratton

It was a pleasure to attend the second Eastbourne Let's Dance event at the Congress Theatre earlier this week. The event was led by Ratton School and the South Downs Learning Trust, with our students taking a lead role in performing and helping organise over the two nights. Our students' dance was fantastic too, and it is these evenings on the school calendar which are special and fill you with pride regarding the skills, talents and abilities of our students.

Here is a quote from a primary school teacher on our students I'd like to share:

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to your students for being such a supportive audience when our group of children were performing. They were cheering, clapping and gave everyone a huge confidence boost.

Please could you say a big thank you from everyone. They were a credit to your school."

This term also saw our school production of Fame. I am always incredibly impressed with how our students rise to the demands of performing in three evening shows and the attendant matinees yet maintain such energy and enthusiasm. We were able to give Year 7 and 8 students the opportunity to see the show. As standard at Ratton, it was a great show, and amongst the great ensemble work, there were some standout individual performances. Thanks to the Performing Arts team for their dedication and supporting our young people in developing their creativity and confidence to perform.

We also held our Careers Week – some excellent work around personal development led by Mrs Peters and Mrs Hylands. We welcomed visitors to talk with Year 9 students about their careers and held a series of assemblies to focus on the world of work and preparation for modern life.

All students in Years 9 and 10 visited the Careers Fair at East Sussex College with students from other local schools organised by Mrs Peters. I enjoyed attending and seeing just how engaged our students were with the wide range of educational providers and employers present at the event. A great opportunity for our students to think about their futures and how their learning at school can help unlock future opportunities.

Josh Babarinde, Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Eastbourne, visited school to talk with students about his life and experience as part of our Parliament Day, a key part of our curriculum delivering on the British values of democracy and the rule of law. It was a very entertaining talk in an election year, which proceeded a student vote on student candidates who had created their own parties and policies – many of which were centred around sustainability and improving the education system nationally. Some great speeches were delivered, and I was convinced that among our student politicians we will find potential future Eastbourne MPs! This event was followed by a visit to parliament the next day for Year 9 students and our Year 10 student leaders. Thanks to Miss Black for organising the events.

Sticking with elections, it was a pleasure to see Matilda Jansch and Matthias Whitby elected as our Head Students in Year 10 this year. Congratulations to both, who I'm sure will prove to embody our Ratton virtues to the school community over the coming year. Mrs Papagna and I had the privilege of interviewing candidates for the role, and a process included speeches in front of peers and an election for students and staff followed. We now have our new leadership team in Year 10 in place, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank those outgoing Year 11 student leaders for all their effort and teamwork over the last year. I look forward to watching the progress of our new leadership team over the coming months.

Sporting Success

- A big well done to our #TeamRatton's swimming squad who competed in the SSSCA Swimming Gala, where we came in second place overall. Well done.
- A great achievement for Daisy H in #TeamYear7, who had her first football match representing #TeamRatton playing for South East Sussex Schools, where the team won 3-1. Well done.
- To all of our learners who have signed up for Boxing, in affiliation with Eastbourne Boxing Club, as part of an extra-curricular opportunity or, as part of the mentoring programme. Paul (#EBC) informs me of your hard work, great attitude and commitment thus far, keep it up.
- A big well done to Herbie W in #TeamYear9 who, after several years of study and practice, attained his black belt in karate. Also, to Xander B in #TeamYear9 who recently was awarded his blue belt and to Paddy H in #TeamYear9, who also attained his black belt. Fantastic achievements and huge dedication, particularly for black belt awards. Well done. Keep up the hard work, all of you, great achievements.
- To all our students across years 8 – 11 who represented #TeamRatton in the local schools partnership 3V3 Basketball Tournament. We had some great achievements across the day and all of the players did us proud. Well done.
- A big well done goes to Millie S in #TeamYear7, who won first place at the South East Performing Arts Challenge. Well done, keep up the hard work.
- A well done goes out to Jess F and Amelia S in #TeamYear10, who both represented Sussex in the SEESFA U16 Girls tournament. The team won 6 to 1 against Kent, gaining them a place in the semi-finals. Well done.

- A big well done to Fin L-F in #TeamYear9 who, together with the rest of the Sussex U15 boys team, did amazingly well in the National Cross Country Championships. Fin continues to work hard in his running, training in various competitions and we wish him well. We look forward to hearing of more of your achievements.
- A big well done goes to Daisy H in #TeamYear7 who, this time, came first place in the years 7-8 high flyers and second place in the synchro year 9 trampolining categories. Well done Daisy, keep it up and we look forward to hearing of more of your achievements.
- A big well done goes to our Sports Leaders who assisted with #TeamOcklynge's Ock Cup 2024 event towards the end of last term. As ever, they did us proud and assisted younger learners from across Eastbourne on this day with kindness and patience. Well done all of you, keep it up. We look forward to hearing of more #SportsLeader achievements throughout Term 5 and beyond.
- Another big shout-out and well done to those learners who represented #TeamRatton in this year's #LetsDance2024 event, which saw over 20 local schools come together all in the name of #Dane. A wonderfully celebrated local event, with many supporters in attendance on the night (thank you!). Your routine was seamless, and you did yourselves and all of us very #PROUD. Keep it up.
- And a final big well done goes out to Alex T in #TeamYear9 for his unanimous win in the recent Hastings Boxing Show. Alex represented his team and our community champions, Eastbourne Boxing Club, with pride and commitment which is a testament to your win and continued hard work. Well done, keep it up.

Well done #TeamRatton, another fantastic run of sporting success. Keep up the good work all of you.

Free Daily Breakfast at School

We were pleased to see that students have been taking advantage of the national breakfast programme here at Ratton. We continue to provide free hot and cold breakfasts – hot drinks, cereal, porridge and bagels – in Refresh from 8.15am every morning for all our students. We contribute to funding this initiative, but the majority of the cost is borne by the programme itself.

We know how hard the cost-of-living crisis is affecting our families, and so I will ask you to encourage your children to attend each morning if they need to. We know that if children are hungry, they will struggle to learn at school too, and so the breakfast programme helps us to help our children learn effectively throughout the day. Staff are also present each morning to sit down and chat with students, which makes for a lovely atmosphere and start to the day. All students are welcome to attend, and we'd love to see more students eating a good breakfast to start the day.

Reminders around attendance

I'd like to continue to highlight the importance of good or better attendance of your child at school. Students in last year's Year 11 whose attendance was above 95% achieved almost a grade higher than target on average. Attendance between 90.1% and 95% gained just over a half a grade higher than target on average, but attendance below 80% meant that GCSE grades gained on average

were up to 1.5 grades below target. The evidence really does prove that good attendance means good GCSE outcomes.

The good news is that attendance at Ratton School continues to remain above both the national and East Sussex average attendance rate for secondary schools; thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your child attends school regularly. However, in line with the national picture, attendance is down versus last year following the pandemic. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's Year Team if you would like to discuss support or any issues around your child's attendance and we will help you in any way we can.

Staying with this subject 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.

Reminders for the new term

Uniform has looked good so far this term, with students looking smart and ready to learn. However, there are a couple of issues I'd like to address in this bulletin for the new term.

Please can I remind parents and carers that hoodies and unbranded jumpers are not part of school uniform. Students will receive a signature on their handbook for each occasion they are wearing a non-Ratton sweatshirt or hoodie. Can I also ask parents and carers to support us in encouraging their children not to wear joggers or tracksuit trousers under their school trousers. We have seen a small number of students do so this term and conceal items such as vapes within them. For safeguarding reasons, and in line with our uniform policy, we will ask any student wearing these items under uniform trousers to remove joggers or tracksuit trousers in a suitable location. Refusal to do so will mean that we would need to contact home and arrange for the student involved to go home and change, before readmittance to school.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind parents that we do not expect to see students using mobile phones at school; if we do, they will be confiscated and stored safely until the end of the day for students to pick up before they leave school. A significant majority of students work with us on this to keep school a safe place and free from any negative interactions on social media during the day. If a student needs to make a call home in an emergency, we can always facilitate this; if you as a

parent or carer need to contact your child, please phone via reception and we can find your child to speak with you. Thank you for your support on this.

Safeguarding at the beginning and end of the school day

Please can I respectfully remind parents and carers not to park on the yellow zig zags on the road outside of school during the day. By choosing to do so, you are putting the safety of school community members at risk. Please do be respectful of staff who may request that you park elsewhere. I appreciate traffic can be very busy on Park Avenue at the beginning and end of the day, particularly in wet weather, but the safety of our students and staff must always take priority. Thank you for your cooperation.

Upcoming Events

We start the term with an INSET Day on Monday 15th April. Staff will be focusing on school improvement priorities and their own professional development targets. We will welcome all students back for lessons at 8.35am on Tuesday 16th April for term 5. For our Year 11 students we have a range of revision sessions happening over the holiday; please encourage your child to attend these sessions. If you are a Year 11 parent or carer, please do talk to your Year 11 child regarding revision over the holiday; I would like to thank staff who are providing opportunities for students to come in and work on site over the holiday on their revision.

Please see separate communications for details regarding which curriculum areas are providing sessions.

We also look forward to welcoming our Year 8 parents and carers for our parental consultation evening on Thursday 18th April. Please do take the opportunity to engage face to face with teachers and bring your child for some meaningful conversations around their learning.

I hope you and your families can spend some lovely time together this holiday, thank you for your support this term, and we look forward to working with you moving into the summer term.

Best wishes,



Mr Peevers
Headteacher

