

10 October 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Welcome to another update as we approach half term. Our Year 7s have largely settled in really well and it is great to be running school much more normally and have some of the features that make TCS special returning.

We've seen the return of after-school clubs and several fixtures and sporting successes in various year groups. Year 8 rugby have won three out of four rugby fixtures; Year 8 girls have won two out of four netball fixtures; Year 11 boys finished third out of ten in the Rugby 10s tournament and our football academy in the Sixth Form's Exeter City Football Development Programme beat Bournemouth 3-1 a couple of weeks' ago. We've had auditions and the recruitment of a cast for an exciting production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in early 2022; we have music and dance performances taking place again as well Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions successfully completed. Another recent highlight has been welcoming Sam Lock from TRAIL Art who worked with a number of classes on an art-based project educating pupils about COP 26 and the environment. The moths they made out of milk cartons will be part of a large exhibition at the event in Glasgow next month.

We've also given out our Merit Awards from last year. Congratulations to all who achieved Bronze, Silver or Gold and a particular well done to the top ten in each year group who gained the Platinum Award. We have also just selected our new batch of prefects in Year 11 and ambassadors are just being selected for the Sixth Form. These all had to complete letters of application and were then interviewed by a panel. Congratulations to all of them and we look forward to their ideas and support in developing our school, along with the School Council.

Parent Communications

Along with this letter is a newsletter from our Parent and Community Association (PACA) explaining who they are and their aims. Please have a look, consider joining and/or how you can support. One important development that PACA are going to support us with is the running of a second-hand uniform shop. More will follow on this but if your child has outgrown any items in reasonable condition, please consider sending them in to Student Services so we can build our stocks. This coming Friday (15th October) is a non-school uniform day and we ask on these days that you or your sons/daughters donate a pound. This first 'mufti day' of the year will go to PACA. Collection is online, via Parent Pay, and we will send out a reminder, but every pound counts and your donation will be appreciated. The money that PACA raise will ultimately be invested back in our school to improve pupils' experiences, and they will have a say in this. I'm looking forward to hearing ideas from our School Council shortly on this.

We have run a termly Parent Forum for several years where any parents/carers can come into school to meet with senior leaders and discuss issues or developments. In recent times, we have done this remotely. I would like to hear your views about how we can best continue to communicate and work with you. We currently plan to host a Parent Forum on Wednesday 3 November at 6.00pm but I would be grateful if you could take five minutes to complete a brief online survey providing us with

Principal: Mr James O'Connell

Exeter Road, Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 9HZ

Tel: 01626 774091 **Visit:** www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk

some feedback and your ideas about how we can continue to improve communications and work together effectively to develop our school: [Link to survey](#)

Uniform & Expectations

Uniform, equipment and punctuality have been improving but we can still do better on these fronts. With a lot of our pupils coming to school on foot (which is a good thing) we do have an extra degree of challenge in terms of punctuality (school buses tend to make arrival at school pretty reliable). The distracting influence of friends or a 'lie in' can be challenging for some. We are tracking punctuality closely and your 'encouragement' to help your sons and daughters to get to school on time is appreciated. They should be in school for 8.45, ready for tutor time at 8.50. Likewise, reminding them to continue to bring a full pencil case and all of their equipment into school in a proper bag is vital.

Uniform is better from where we were but an ongoing challenge for a few. Pupils should not have piercings through cartilage and this has clearly become particularly fashionable in recent years. All piercings have to be removed for PE under the health and safety guidance imposed on schools. We are having a few unnecessary battles with some who refuse to take these out. PE is an essential activity, as well as compulsory in the curriculum, and we therefore have to insist on this point. From after half term, any pupil refusing to take out a piercing in school will be sent home.

Home Learning

As previously mentioned, we have been looking carefully at how we set, monitor and track the completion of home learning by pupils. What has happened over the lockdowns is that gaps have grown bigger between our young people. Some have got better at working and learning independently; others the reverse. This is an important area and vital for pupils' ultimate success. I would urge you to log in to Class Charts as a parent and check how your sons and daughters are getting along. We have or will shortly be sending out further information on this.

Canteens

As you are probably aware, we are continuing to run two canteens (there were previously only one) and all pupils can go to either. There is hot food and snacks at both but a full lunch is always available at lunchtime. There were some issues with getting the quantities of food available at both locations right each break for which we are very sorry. We have now rectified this and we are working on measures to reduce the queuing time. Our excellent new catering manager is also continuing to develop the food choice and quality and this is another area in which we are seeking the support of the School Council to consult pupils.

Covid Measures

We have been luckier than many areas and schools in terms of Covid cases but we have had a steady trickle of people suffering with the virus. I am glad to say that all positive cases seem to not have experienced serious symptoms and to have recovered well. The use of the lateral flow device tests means that most cases so far have been detected before pupils come in to school with symptoms. Please continue to use these tests and ensure your child/children test at least twice a week – Sundays and Wednesdays. The new version of the tests are even easier, coming with pre-set test solutions and requiring only nasal swab.

Unless your child is exempt, please can you remind and encourage them to bring a mask into school and to wear this in public places – in corridors and entering the canteens in particular. We all know that people aren't wearing them as much out of school but they do make some difference and our school is a busy and, at times, crowded place. I think that if mask wearing in corridors prevents one person catching the virus, this is worth the minimal effort required.

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The Covid vaccine will be offered to pupils aged 12-16 in our school shortly. We're awaiting confirmation of a date from the NHS team who run this. Just to emphasise again, this is a health matter and not an issue we are dealing with directly. No-one will be given the vaccine in school without a parent or carer's permission.

Key Dates

Finally, please see some key dates to be aware of for the near future:

Fri 15 Oct	Non-uniform day
Wed 20 Oct	6 th Form Parents' Evening (Remote), 3.30-6.00pm
Mon 8 Nov	Year 9 Parents' Evening (Remote), 3.30-6.30pm
Wed 17 Nov	Post-16 Options Evening (for Year 11, in school), 5.30-7.30pm
Mon 29 Nov-Fri 10 Dec	Assessment weeks for all years
Mon 6 Dec	Key Stage 4 Options Evening (for Year 9, in school), 5.30-7.30pm
Thu 16 Dec	Christmas Concert
Fri 17 Dec	Non-uniform half-day and end of term

Best wishes



James O'Connell
Principal