

Stour Valley Community School

16 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I write for the final time this Summer Term. As I outlined in my communication earlier this week about re-opening in September, I will write again on Friday 21st August, the day after GCSE results are published, and then again on Tuesday 1st September, prior to school opening. As we all know, a lot can happen in 7 weeks during this COVID-19 pandemic, and it will be important to confirm whether there will be any changes to our opening plans at that point.

A couple of weeks ago, I asked staff to let me have any nominations for students they felt should receive a Headteacher Certificate of Commendation this term for excellent work and/or effort in a particular subject, community service, resilience shown in these challenging times, or any other reason they felt appropriate. I created a certificate template and decided that I would hand write the certificates, to give them a personal touch in a term when we have had such limited personal contact with our students. Over the past two days I have written 137 certificates and used up two fountain pen ink cartridges! They will be posted out this week. I received a total of 193 nominations and I didn't resent one second of the time it took to write those certificates. It was a joy to read about the achievements of so many of our students and to be able to acknowledge their success formally. The maximum number of nominations any one student received was 5 – truly impressive.

Well done and congratulations to all our students for showing such resilience and determination throughout this lockdown period. The whole school closure period has lasted much longer than anyone imagined and we are very much looking forward to bringing our school community back together in September. I also want to extend my gratitude to you all, our parents and carers, for your patience and support in these times.

My final newsletter of the year is often filled with messages of thanks and farewells. This one is no different. I want to make space to offer my thanks to the Stour Valley staff for all their hard work this year. This term has brought significant new challenges and our staff have risen to the occasion with aplomb. We are a community like any other, and among our staff we have had ill relatives to care for, childcare and home schooling, as well as staff who have been shielding and who are clinically vulnerable. We have pulled together as a team and supported each other through this time. The change to working practice with our changeover to delivering our teaching via Teams was significant and very positive in many ways. Staff have been training together and supporting each other virtually since the end of April and this has benefitted our students enormously. In May we began to reconnect with our classes and year groups via Teams. Miss Spearpoint even managed to get the new prefects to introduce themselves to the rest of the school via Teams, and then organise speeches and voting for our Lead Prefects using Teams. I am sure you will join me in thanking the Stour Valley staff for their efforts and wishing them a restful summer break.

We are only saying farewell to one member of teaching staff this summer. Mr Robson (teacher of English) is leaving us. We wish him well in his new ventures. We will be welcoming three new members of teaching staff to our team in September. Miss Savage and Mrs Gill will be joining the English department and Mrs Drury will be joining the Maths department.

We are also saying goodbye to Professor Richard Smith, our Chair of Governors. He is retiring as a governor this summer. Professor Smith was one of the founding governors who set up and opened the school in September 2011 and his local knowledge will be sorely missed. We wish him a long and happy retirement and thank him most sincerely for all he has done for the school. Mr Bursell, our Vice Chair of Governors, will be stepping up for an interim period from September 2020 and Mr Luxon has been seconded from the Trust Board to be Vice Chair and support with the succession planning for the governing body.

Two of our school policies have had COVID-19 amendments/additions, the Behaviour Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. Here is a link to the policies section of our website, should you wish to read them: <http://www.stourvalleycommunityschool.org/index.php/policies>. You will also find the Uniform Policy here. Please do refer to this if you are buying new uniform over the summer.

All that is left is for me to wish you and your families a restful, happy, healthy summer. Keep safe and we look forward to seeing your children again in September.

With kind regards

Rachel Kelly, Headteacher



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