

Newsletter 14 February 2025

Dear Parent/ Carer

The theme for this week's newsletter introduction is collaboration. I want the St Ivo Academy to be an active partner in the local community and wider education, so I am very pleased to gift our support to both a local initiative spearheaded by the St Ives and neighbouring primary schools and the county-wide action led by the Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads group. Details of both can be found below.

In addition, I am pleased to confirm the school's term dates for 2025-2026 academic year. A link to these can now be found on the main term dates pages, together with a traditional calendar layout version in case parents/ carers find this easier to reference. A quick link can be found here: <https://www.astreastivo.org/term-dates-2025-2026>
I apologise for the slight delay in getting these to you, but the dates have been negotiated this year so that we can collaborate and work in partnership with other schools, including primaries, across our Trust.

But first, here's a update about the sixth form refurb...

Sixth form update

The first end-of-term full-group project review meeting was held this morning for the sixth form refurb with our CEO Rowena Hackwood, reviewing timelines for each aspect of the work to keep everything on track for a September 2025 reopening.

Just for reference, the project team consists of me, Clare Sherwood (vice principal), Julie Carles (regional operations manager), Jo Myhill-Johnson (regional director), Guy Johnson (strategic head of estates), James Wright (chief financial officer), and Rowena; Guy acts as our liaison to the architects and external consultants and Clare and I are acting as the 'clients' on behalf of the school and its community.

The final concept illustration to share with you is how the 'Street' area, between the sixth form and the resources centre, could look when finished:



Access to mobile phones in Years 7 and 8

As you will be aware, there are increasing concerns that smartphones might be harmful to children's well-being. There is no doubt that many of the issues that schools encounter around bullying, unkindness, or access to inappropriate content stem from behaviour on smartphones.

Parents and carers may already be aware of the "[Smartphone Free Childhood](#)" group. They are a grass-roots movement, created by parents, that argue that "childhood is too short to be spent on a smartphone."

You may have seen the [BBC Breakfast Interview](#) about the campaign, or the short film "[A Stolen Childhood](#)".

The St Ives primary schools have decided to lend their professional support to the group by writing to parents and carers to make them aware of the group, and in particular of their "[Parent Pact](#)". As this initiative is actually aimed at students up to and including Year 8, I feel it is really important that we also add our support to this project by raising awareness of it with our parents and carers as well.

"By signing this Pact, you're joining a growing community of parents in Cambridgeshire choosing to wait to give their child a smartphone until at least the end of Year 9. The Pact is anonymous, but the more of us who sign, the more powerful it becomes in shifting the social norm in our community. Plus we'll use the data to show the Government how much this matters to parents across the country, so that they take urgent action to protect children from the harms of smartphones and social media. Your choice – and your voice – really is powerful."

We recognise that this is absolutely a matter of parent/ carer choice, but we also recognise the potential value of this movement. We know that many of our families feel a pressure to provide smartphones for their children because they know (or their children

tell them) that all their friends have them. We know that many parents and carers find themselves providing smartphones for their children even though they have their own very strong reservations about doing so. This is an opportunity to reduce the pressure on families; if children know that none of their peers have smartphones, they are less likely to feel they will miss out by not having one of their own.

Some studies suggest that the average UK 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on their smartphone. This leaves little time for the real-world activities and relationships that enable them to learn essential life skills.

The resources and community that [Smartphone Free Childhood](#) provide may support you to make a decision for your own children.

Cambridgeshire Secondary Headteacher joint communications

As a collaborative group of secondary school leaders across Cambridgeshire, we have agreed that it would be helpful to ensure that certain messages are consistent across the county so that there isn't any difference in experience dependant on the secondary school your child attends. Please find below an introductory letter from the group, and the first topic letter concerning attendance.

- [CSH Introduction Letter Spring Term 2025](#)
- [CSH Attendance Letter Spring Term 2025](#)

The rest of this week's newsletter covers timetable changes, a change to use of the resource centre after half term, a message from the local authority about adult SEND, and a advert for further local mock interview volunteers.

At the end of this half term I want to finish by congratulating Year 11 on their approach and dedication over the last three weeks, as today marks the end of their first experience of the full suite of mock exams, in readiness for the summer. They are a credit to themselves, and deserve and well-earned rest over half term. Likewise, I wish Year 13 all the best with their revision as their mock exams start as soon as we get back. However, do forget that there are still revision sessions happening over half term in school – details can be found in last week's newsletter: <https://www.astreastivo.org/newsletter-7-february-2025/>

However you are spending the February half term, I wish you a pleasant week and look forward to seeing everyone back on Monday 24 February 2025.

Yours faithfully

Tony Meneagh
Principal

Timetable changes

Mrs McCartney (maths teacher) starts maternity leave at half term. We have therefore made some adjustments to the maths timetable, which are now live on Bromcom.

In terms of tutor group, Mr Kennedy will take Mrs McCartney's year 11 group for maths intervention, whilst Mrs Onireti takes the year 12 group previously with Mr Kennedy.

Resource Centre after half term

Year 12 and 13 mocks take place over the first three weeks after half term. These will be based in the resource centre, to allow us to keep the common room available to all sixth formers.

We will be making room 23, a computer room, available to students at lunchtimes. Please do note however that capacity will be limited. In any instances of inclement weather, we will also open the main hall.

If students wish to borrow from the resource centre, they can find the catalogue at <https://u009006.microlibrarian.net/>. Students should then email resource@astreastivo.org with the item of the item they would like to borrow. It will then be available for collection from room 23 the following lunchtime. Returns should also be made to room 23 at lunchtime.

House points

House point totals so far this academic year:

- Bridge 33,763
- Crosier 34,355
- Leger 32,341
- River 34,900
- Wheatsheaf 34,638

Preparing for adulthood SEND festival

Please see [information from the local authority](#) that may be of interest to some families.

Calling all parents – mock interview volunteers needed!

Do you have experience in interviewing? If so, we would be grateful for your help.

As part of our careers programme, we are offering our Year 10 students the opportunity to take part in mock interviews—and we would love your support!

Monday 3rd March, 9:00–3:00 in school, lunch and refreshments provided.

You can volunteer for all or part of the day—any support is greatly appreciated. We will provide you with a set of interview questions

If you're able to help, please contact helen.parks@astreastivo.org.

Thank you for your support in preparing our students for their futures!