

Newsletter 14 June 2024

Dear Parent/ Carer

This week saw us celebrate the end to our Year 11 students' time at the St Ivo Academy in their leavers' assembly. Mr Hall did an amazing job in bringing together an event which I am sure everyone will remember for a long time. There were many laughs, a few tears, but a great time was had by all. I would like to publicly thank Mr Hall for all his hard work in putting this together for our students, and thank him again for everything he has done for our 2024 leavers during his time as their head of year.

The remainder of the newsletter includes a lot of detail and rationale around two subjects. I appreciate some parents and carers may find this level of detail a bit much, but I'm including it for those who want to really understand the 'why' around these decisions.

- KS3 curriculum changes – more detailed background information
- Uniform changes – more detailed background information

Finally, we would like to make a minor change to the length of the school day from September 2024, so it is important that we consult with all stakeholders on this.

KS3 curriculum changes – more detailed background information

This week saw the first meeting of the school's Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Details of what we discussed will be made available after the Local Governance Committee (LGC) meeting next Wednesday (19 June 2024). However, one of the points raised was a request for clarity and a more detailed rationale around the changes to KS3 for next year. I believe the PAC found my response useful, so I'm going to try and provide all parents and carers with the same information below.

A series of events has led to the changes to next year's curriculum, so it's important to understand the full context.

Having had agency in the food department last academic year, we were pleased to have secured a trainee food teacher for this academic year. However, the departure of this trainee food teacher early in the autumn term led to the continued need to engage agency staff for the delivery of the food curriculum this year. Despite repeatedly trying, we have been unable to fill this vacancy. As the staffing in food will change again from September 2024, and the number of staff in the department reduces, the likelihood/probability of us being able to staff the department with subject specialists reduced significantly again (based on our current recruitment experience). That left me with two choices: (1) keep the curriculum the same and hope to 'find' more food teachers (even though there is a national shortage), but accept agency staff filling the void if we are unsuccessful, or (2) adapt the curriculum offer for one year, giving the time to design technology instead in Years 7 to 9, and reduce the need to cover the gap with agency staff. While some agency staff are excellent, there's no guarantee. There are also no guarantees about continuous availability either which could lead to frequent changes in teachers. Therefore, I chose consistency and quality of student lesson experience over curriculum coverage (for one year).

There are also several Year 10 into 11, and Year 12 into 13 food classes that need to be prioritised. So, the available food specialists available have been allocated to these classes first. That is the reason why food in Years 7-10 and Year 12 cannot happen next year.

I strongly believe that the incorporation of an excellent food curriculum is of the utmost importance in a school. It is a fantastic subject that inspires many students and has huge importance for students' future health and our society. That's why I want food to return in 2025/2026, starting again with Year 7 and 8 as a minimum, but hopefully moving further up the school again if we are successfully in appointing other food teachers next year.

Food teachers also deliver our Childcare and Health and Social Care subjects. So, there was a potential for delivery issues next year for these courses too. I am incredibly grateful to Miss Hart, one of our IT teachers with degree that covers this content and huge experience in delivering vocational courses, for offering to take up the delivery of these next year to help our students out. However, as I am sure you've now realised, this has a knock-on effect on our Year 7-9 computer science curriculum, as Miss Hart would not be available next year for its delivery if she is teaching child development and health and social care. I very much want to put computer science back on the curriculum for 2025/2026, but for next year I have prioritised examination groups, and used excellent staff from other areas currently teaching second subjects and with capacity next year, such as dance, to fill the gap. I believe that dance is a highly thought-of subject within our community, the fabulous Ivolution work that I experienced this year being but one example. Therefore, I feel that this is the best compromise we can make, and a great compromise at that.

I understand that some parents and carers may be concerned about the loss of computer science as a subject in the current world, and the loss of important IT skills being developed. Whilst computer science does support IT skills, it is quite different to the word/ excel/ powerpoint/ email IT lessons that parents/ carers make have experienced when they and I were at school. The content of the computer science current has moved on significantly from that to a far more scientific, logical, programming focus that is more akin to mathematics than the basic computer literacy of old. The PAC has charged me with investigating whether such skill development could be taught in some way during the school week, and I will take this forward even when computer science returns to the main key stage three curriculum offer.

With food teachers, and computer science teachers being in short supply nationally, I have chosen to offer subjects that can be delivered by our own subject specialists, rather risk the unknown nature of agency staff. I hope that this shouldn't last more than a year. I hope the above helps to give parents/ carers a clear understanding of my rationale.

Uniform changes – more detailed background information

A few parents/ carers have contacted us about the upcoming uniform change and asked us to justify the changes in the current cost of living crisis. This is a fair point to raise, but the direct comparison between the current 2023/2024 Price and Buckland costs, and the future Chroma 2024/2025 costs that we have seen being quoted is a little misleading.

The principle of uniform is that it does not demarcate between socioeconomic backgrounds – all students are wearing the same clothes. At the moment, one area of issue in school is leggings/ tracksuit bottoms for PE; whilst many students wear a relatively expensive sports brand, not all can afford to do so. Hence, we are introducing the same PE bottoms for all students.

We acknowledge that some uniform items are more expensive from Chroma compared to Price & Buckland. However, having reviewed the quality of garments provided by different uniform suppliers, we believe that the garments provided by Chroma will give better longevity and therefore cost saving to families over time.

It is also important to note that we cannot be sure about what cost increases would have been put in place by Price & Buckland had we continued with them as our uniform supplier for 2024-25 (they do publish updated prices every year).

Students have come to school in PE kit on days when they have practical PE/ dance since autumn 2023. This change was made to maximise learning time and support students who felt less comfortable getting changed with peers. I think it is fair to say that the uniformity of our current PE kit does not meet the same standards as our 'standard' uniform. We are committed to staying with the PE-kit-on-PE-days approach, so the standard of dress had to improve accordingly. We felt that the options offered by Chroma were of better quality than that currently available by Price & Buckland, so we went with the new supplier. Many other local schools, across a variety of trusts, are now using Chroma as their uniform supplier, with predominantly very positive feedback. Schools include Swavesey Village College, Northstowe Secondary College and Abbey College. The change in supplier for the PE kit necessitated a change in supplier for the 'standard' uniform, so bespoke items such as the skirt and tie needed to change too.

The change to standard ties is because previous feedback from families has been that the clip-on ties are easily taken off and accidentally discarded, or the clip-on attachment breaks, therefore again increasing cost over time.

We do recognise that any school uniform carries cost, and are offering the following financial assistance:

- For Year 6 into 7 families where the student is eligible for Pupil Premium funding we will provide all branded items (main uniform and PE kit).
- For current Year 7 to 10 families where the student is eligible for Pupil Premium funding we have offered to purchase branded PE leggings or training trousers.
- For current Year 7 to 9 families, we will provide all students with a new tie in their year group colour, in exchange for their current clip-on tie. Current Year 10s will continue with the clip-on tie into Year 11.
- Having listened to concerns, we will also provide Year 6 into 7 families on universal credit with the quarter zip PE top. This is roughly equivalent in value to suggested cost difference between the 2023-24 Price & Buckland uniform and 2024-25 Chroma uniform. If you would like to take up this offer, please email uniform@astreastivo.org with proof of your eligibility.

Student voice discussions have shown that students like the new uniform, particularly the new smarter PE kit. We appreciate that change can be difficult for some, but we believe that the new uniform is an improvement on quality as well as presentation. We also believe that there will be long-term savings for parents and carers due to the quality and reduced need to replace certain items over time. With the additional financial support we are willing to put in to make this change easier for parents and carers, and the fact that direct comparisons between different financial year prices are not fair, we believe we are still delivering on our original promise to reduce the total cost of a uniform for families.

Small change to the school day consultation

Now that we have lived with, and reflected upon, the changes I introduced for the school day when first came to the St Ivo Academy at the end of summer of 2023, I believe we can revert to the same school end time that we had before: 3.00pm. I remember that some parents/ carers expressed concern with the extension to the length of the school day. The removed five minutes will be taken from the afternoon tutorial session, not subject lesson time.

We are also reviewing the organisation and allocation of times within the school day, but as this will not impact on parents and carers and their pick-up/ drop-off times, they will be communicated later once we have had chance to consult with staff in greater detail, and only if we decide to proceed.

If you would like to submit your view on the proposed movement of the school end time to 3.00pm, please email office@astreastivo.org with your views by 12 noon on Thursday 28 June 2024.

Yours faithfully

Tony Meneagh

Interim Principal

Upcoming diary dates

Monday 17 June: Year 7 assessments begin

Tuesday 18 June: Year 12 UCAS Expo trip

Monday 24 June: Year 10 written mocks begin

Thursday 27 June: Year 11 into 12 induction day

Thursday 27 June: Sixth Form Ball

Friday 28 June: professional day for staff training

House Points

House totals year to date:

- Bridge 50,366

- Crosier 48,619
- Leger 47,736
- River 50,421
- Wheatsheaf 46,463

Congratulations to the following student who has achieved 200 House points (white award):

- Bella 8Mw
- Nina 10By, Liam 10Hl, Daniel 10Ht, Nadia 10Ht, Ben 10Kd, Maja 10Kd, Edward 10La, Joshua 10Pe, Ameerah 10Sg, Joshua 10Sg, Arthur 10Sz

Congratulations to the following students who have achieved 150 House points (gold award):

- Elliot 8Jh/Dm, Remy 8Mw
- Izzy 10Hl, Aisha 10Kd, Henry 10Kd, Amy 10La, Damian 10Pe, Fahad 10Pe, Lewis 10Pe, Halle 10Sg, Harry 10Sg, Evie 10Sq, Noah 10Sq, Sophie 10Sq, Henry 10Sz, Robert 10Sz

Congratulations to the following students who have achieved 100 House points (silver award):

- Matilda 10Bf, Anqi 10By, Olivia 10Sg

Congratulations to the following students who have achieved 75 House points (bronze award):

- Jessica 10Kd

Cyber Choices and Online Safety

Free workshops for parents/carers are being offered by the police force. Details can be found [here](#).

RSPCA Competition

RSPCA



YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHER AWARDS 2024

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VOUCHERS
AN EPIC TRIP

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PUT ANIMALS IN THE PICTURE – AND BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING SOME GREAT PRIZES!

If you're 18 or under and can take great photos, this is the competition for you! Send us your best animal images by **15 August 2024**. Finalists are invited to our Tower of London awards ceremony with TV's Chris Packham.



ENTER AT: [RSPCA.ORG.UK/YPA](https://www.rspca.org.uk/ypa)



Turkey - Jamie Smart, cat with dog - Thomas Bouverie, cat - Ellyth Sturges, seals and barn - Alex George, vespa vespa - Anna McDonald