

Newsletter 17 May 2024

Dear Parent/ Carer

The focus of this week's newsletter is to provide further updates and clarity around several areas; these include first aid provision, reporting absence, how we support students when the weather is warm, clarification about the new ties, and finally updated dates for the new uniform try-before-you-buy events.

First aid

As previously communicated, the school has purchased Medical Tracker to further improve our response times, monitoring, and reporting of requests for medical and wellbeing assistance from our first aid team.

The final training sessions for staff were completed this week, and we are now in a position to trial its introduction next week.

This is the procedure for students seeking medical or wellbeing assistance from a first aider:

- If a student needs support during lesson time, they still need to go their lesson so that they are supervised; all teachers complete basic first aid awareness training to be able to support students.
- The teacher will contact our roaming first aid team via Medical Tracker to come and support the student.
- Teachers will not send students on their own to 'find' a first aider as this could be very unsafe for the student in question; neither do we ask other students to escort unwell students as it is unfair to place this level of responsibility on another student.
- In an emergency, teachers will send a different student to reception to seek urgent assistance from the roaming team.
- Our first aid team will monitor the requests for support as they come in and prioritise their visits based on the information supplied; Medical Tracker automatically alerts the first aider to a child's medical notes, so that they are fully aware of a child's needs before deciding on who to see first.
- Students who need support during break or lunch should go to the canteen where they can always find a senior leader; the senior leader will then contact first aid if required.
- In the unlikely event of a first aider not being able to attend by the end of the lesson (eg the request is made near the end of the period), the teacher will keep the student with them until a first aider arrives or take them to a senior leader near the canteen.
- First aiders will contact parents/ carers by phone if required; in addition, you should receive an automated email letting you know your child has been seen by a first aider and an overview of the visit for your reference.

We would be grateful if parents/ carers can reinforce this process with their children, as students phoning home instead of seeing their teacher only creates worry for the parent/ carer and doesn't help them getting support in school when they need it.

Attendance clarification

Linked to first aid and being unwell, it is important to clarify that the school does not operate an automatic 48-hour absence policy in response to certain illnesses. We recognise that there is some NHS guidance on this matter, but we leave it to parents/ carers to make the decision on whether their child is well enough to return.

As such, it is important that parents/ carers inform the school before 8.30am on each and every day of absence as we will not be making any assumptions regarding absence due to previous or ongoing illness. Any ongoing illness not reported could result in an absence text being sent and the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Warm weather update

As the weather warms up, it is important that students come to school with a water bottle that they can refill to keep them hydrated.

[Advance notice] After May half term, we will move onto a summer uniform system for the remainder of the academic year:

- Students can choose whether to wear their blazers without asking for permission*
- Students may wish to consider wearing short-sleeved shirts*
- Students may wish to consider wearing tailored shorts (black or grey) instead of trousers*

Please note the following:

- The rest of our uniform expectations are still in place
- Coats/ Hoodies/ Other outside layers must not be used instead of the blazer; we expect students to continue to bring in, and wear, their blazer if the weather is not warm enough*
- Any student wearing inappropriate summer attire instead of meeting our uniform expectations may be asked to go home and change, or removed from the rest of the student body until the matter can be resolved.

** These adaptations refer to standard uniform days only*

Clarification about the new ties

As promised in the parent engagement event, and in other communication, there is an option of clip-on ties for those students who need them. However, this adaption to the new uniform is not a free choice for everyone.

For clarity, the school will provide an alternative clip-on tie in the following situations only:

- There is a mental health, wellbeing or safeguarding situation and either the safeguarding or pastoral team would support such a request.
- There is a special educational need that could be helped by using clip-on ties and the school's Senco is in support of a such a request.

If you believe your child falls into one of these criteria, please

email uniform@astreastivo.org.

Uniform try-before-you-buy dates

We have unfortunately had to change the timing of one of the try-before-you-buy uniform sessions. These will now happen on:

- Tuesday 18 June 2024 4pm to 6pm (instead of Thursday 20 June 2024)
- Wednesday 26 June 2024 4pm to 6pm (no change)

Biometrics for the canteen

Most Year 7 tutor groups have now been registered for the 'fingerprint' biometrics system in the canteen. This is already starting to speed up the canteen queue. The remaining Year 7s will be registered next week where we have consent.

We would encourage Year 8 and 9 families to give consent for 'fingerprint' biometrics for purchasing items in the canteen using the following

link: <https://astreaathena.net/forms/public/67/RDOWLQURAJ>

Yours faithfully

Tony Meneagh

Interim Principal

Upcoming diary dates

Friday 24 May: Year 13 final assembly

Monday 27 to Friday 31 May: half term

House Points

House totals year to date:

- Bridge 46,576
- Crosier 45,044
- Leger 44,324
- River 46,783
- Wheatsheaf 42,910

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

- Amelia 8Bn, Lillie 8Bn, Theo 8Cl, Lauren 8Dt, Yele 8Dt, Tamarine 8Jh/Dm, Alex 8Mw, Tobias 8Tr
- Jayden 9Ev/WI, Thavishi 9Ev/WI, Ben 9Hx, Lois 9Hx, Ombani 9Hx, Sidney 9Hx, Sophie 9Hy, Ammy 9Lk, Lisa 9Yo/Ws
- Grace 10By, Hasnat 10By, Dylan 10Db, Oscar 10Db, Rocco 10Ht, Alisa-Rose 10Kd, Maeve 10Kd, Debbie 10Mu, Amber 10Pe, Henry 10Pe

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

- Oliver 8Cl, Aiden 8Dt, Florence 8Dt, Joseph 8Dt, Lillie 8Dt, Oliver 8Hh, Sophy 8Hh, Samuel 8Jh/Dm, Summer 8Mw, William 8Mw, Caitlin 8Tr

- Mohammed 9Ak, Jamie 9Ev/WI, Charlie 9Go, Daniel 9Hx, Grace 9Hx, Harrison 9Hy, Kate 9Hy, Megan 9Ja/Hw, Esther 9Lk, William 9Lk, Gabriela 9Nn
- Ishtiaq 10Sg, Joana 10Sg, Fallyn 10Sz

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

- Ben 8Cl, Tamima 8Dt, Aamir 8Hh, Emmy 8Hh, Harry 8Pn/Cf, James 8Pn/Cf, Tahla 8Pn/Cf
- Jasper 9Ak, Riley 9Ak, Remy 9Hy
- Riley 10By, Kaya 10Ht, Joshua 10Sg, Alina 10Sz, James 10Sz

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

- Annie 8Hh
- Bilal 9Lk, Alex 9Nn, Eliza 9Nn, Isaac 9Nn
- Steineraj 10By, Tye 10Ht, Aryam 10Sg, Jacob 10Sq, Minah 10Sq, Lexie 10Sz

Congratulations to the following students who have achieved 50 House points (house badge):

- Finley 8Cl
- Summer 9Lk
- Harvey 10By

Gaming and mental health

‘Gaming’ means playing electronic or video games on devices such as Xboxes, smartphones or computers.

For lots of children and young people, gaming is a fun and sociable activity. But sometimes, you might feel worried about your child’s feelings or behaviour around gaming. Or you might be concerned about the amount of time they spend gaming.

How can gaming affect mental health?

When used with healthy boundaries, gaming can be a positive experience. It can also help some children and young people to look after their mental health. Young people tell us that playing video and online games can be a way to:

- relax and unwind after school or work
- take a break from everyday life and get absorbed in something else for a bit
- socialise and connect with friends, and make new friends
- socialise around a common interest, particularly if someone finds this easier or more fun than just chatting
- find a community of people going through similar things
- feel a sense of achievement and learn new skills

When gaming becomes too much

For some young people, gaming can start to negatively affect their mental wellbeing if it becomes too much. When this happens, a young person might feel less in control of what they're doing. For example, they might start to regularly game in a way that stops them from doing other important things. These include spending time with family and friends in real life, sleeping, eating well, exercising and doing schoolwork.

This might happen because a young person needs a bit more help from the adults around them to set healthy limits. Or sometimes, it can happen when a young person starts to use gaming as a coping mechanism. We all need to 'check out' and distract ourselves from our worries sometimes, and that's okay. But if a young person feels like they 'need' to game to cope with their feelings, it can make it harder to have healthy boundaries. This means that gaming can sometimes seem like the 'problem' from the outside, when it's actually a symptom of how a young person is feeling about another part of their life.

Having negative social experiences online

Gaming can also have a negative effect on someone's mental wellbeing if they're having upsetting interactions with other players, or getting negative messages about their identity. This might particularly affect a young person who usually relies on gaming as a safe and relaxing space. A study by the Mental Health Foundation found that our sense of wellbeing around gaming is affected by the extent to which our ethnicity, gender and sexuality is represented in a video or online game. This is why it's really important for young people to find games and online communities that make them feel good about themselves.

Talking to your child about gaming and mental health

If gaming isn't something you grew up with, you might feel unsure about how to handle the conversation. Remember that finding a supportive way to talk to your child is about how you approach it, not knowing everything about the topic.

Try to start with an 'I' phrase. For example, you could say, 'I've noticed you're gaming a lot more than usual at the moment, and I wondered if we could have a chat about it?' Starting a conversation while doing an activity together can also help your child to relax by making it feel like less of a 'big chat'.

Young people don't like it when parents:

- do not recognise the ways in which gaming is helping, and instead approach the conversation as if gaming is 'bad'
- minimise or dismiss the fact that gaming is important to them
- focus on the fact that the time spent gaming could be spent on schoolwork, rather than also thinking about other interests they might enjoy

- ban gaming instead of looking for a compromise, without recognising that this can cut them off from their friends

Young people would like parents to:

- start by finding out what their experience is, rather than assuming gaming is 'bad'
- ask them what they enjoy about gaming and what they get out of it, and show interest in what they have to say
- recognise that gaming is a social thing they do with their friends
- think about ways to make gaming more sociable if they are worried because their child spends lots of time gaming alone
- try to find out what else is going on that might be causing them to game so much, rather than assuming gaming is the problem
- look for a compromise

Setting boundaries and supporting your child to game positively

It's normal for a young person to want to spend time gaming on a regular basis. The point at which it becomes 'too much' depends on what is right for your child, and the boundaries you feel comfortable with as a parent.

If your child is finding it difficult to game in a way that leaves time for other important daily activities, they need help from you to set healthy limits.

Sometimes, setting boundaries around screen time can become a real battleground. If you're having lots of conflict with your child at the moment, it might feel exhausting. But there are things you can do to change the dynamic and introduce some healthier limits.