

15 November 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you with a quick update on some important matters.

Communication with students and parents/carers

The school already uses a variety of methods to communicate with students and parents/carers including texts, email, hard copy and phone calls. This is supplemented by the use of the school website and social media sites with both whole school and departmental accounts. However, we are always looking to improve communications with parents/carers. Therefore, we will shortly be introducing a number of new initiatives which will hopefully help keep you well informed.

We are putting more emphasis on using our Twitter and Instagram sites which will keep students and parents/carers informed of news and specific events from across the school. Also, there will be a weekly bulletin sent via email to all parents which will include a more detailed list of the events and activities across the school. This will be very similar to the weekly bulletin which is shared with students every Monday in tutor time.

In addition, we are rolling out Google Classroom's Guardian facility. Parents/carers will receive a weekly email update on the work and resources that have been set on Google Classroom along with relevant submission deadlines. We hope that this will help parents/carers know what and when homework has been set, for example. A further email with details of how to register for this service will be sent out shortly.

Sixth Form Open Evening and parent/carer subject consultations

Our Sixth Form Open Evening for current Year 11 students is on 17 November from 6pm and parent/carer subject consultations for Year 12 and Year 13 are scheduled for 24 November and 1 December respectively.

World Cup

Some students are excited about the football World Cup that starts next weekend. There is one England game where the kick-off time is in the school day, next Monday. When we are at work or in school it can sometimes be the case that we might wish to be elsewhere (!) or to follow an event of particular interest to us. However, this is not always possible and this is the case next Monday when the normal school-day will run with normal lessons and our usual expectations for student engagement in their learning. Those students who are keen football supporters might choose to watch the game on catch-up or watch the highlights later but they should not be seeking to do so in school time.

SMILE Week

Vandyke has supported an orphanage in Malawi for almost 20 years now. Our fund-raising has assisted the children in the orphanage and played an important part in helping our students to learn about life in other countries and to see how our charity work can bring real benefit to others. Our

SMILE work is led by our Sixth Form students. Please find attached to this email a separate letter from them about SMILE Week this year, which is coming up soon.

Partnerships

I wrote to you some time ago about our work to forge a more formal relationship with Gilbert Inglefield Academy. This proposal had the support of the trust boards at both schools. The Regional Director (RD - the government adviser responsible for approving changes in arrangements between schools) has suggested that the best way for this partnership to be established would be for Vandyke and Gilbert Inglefield to form a small multi-academy trust (MAT) with the opportunity for other local schools to join in the future providing a strong partnership on this side of the town. We believe that this would be a good move and consequently are submitting an application to the RD. If it is approved it means that the two schools can then work with staff and parents/carers to decide whether to proceed and if so then when to do this. It would be subject to a formal consultation process so that all views are taken into account. I will keep you updated.

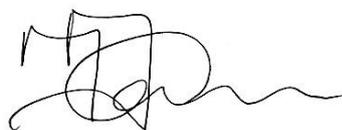
Cost of living

We are acutely aware that the cost of living is increasing and that many families will be struggling with rising energy bills and other increasing costs. We are doing everything we can to keep to a minimum any associated costs of school. We have been able to keep café prices pegged despite the latest round of food inflation. However we have raised the limit on daily spend from £5 to £6 following a demand for this. If you wish your son/ daughter's daily limit to remain at £5 please let the year office know and this can be done.

School has limited funds but we do have our Vandyke Opportunities Fund available to support any family in financial hardship and we seek to provide financial support where we can with the cost of equipment, trips, visits and uniform. Letters for trips, etc, that we send out always specify how to access this support or in all cases do not hesitate to contact the year office or Mrs Ruston, Head of Student Support, on rustonv@vandyke.cbeds.co.uk.

If you have any questions please contact office@vandyke.cbeds.co.uk and we will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Carroll', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending to the right.

Tim Carroll

Headteacher