



7 October 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

There has been a huge amount of positive activity at College already this term and much to celebrate. Thank you for your support of students and their engagement in all that is available, as well as supporting their focus and hard work in learning. It is appreciated.

This communication provides information about events coming up and also about how we are trying to work to support our young people and families at this time with:

- Online Safety - information reminders
- Mental Health - structures of support
- College support with increases to cost of living
- Vaping in young people - information
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You are free to select the aspects of interest and relevance to you.

Online Safety

Our use of iPads means our students are a step ahead in terms of their digital skills, it also means we are particularly alert to the issues around online safety. We know this is a live and current issue for us all but particularly for young people. There is monitoring software and restrictions that exist on the managed iPads with regards to Social Media in particular. There will also be some wider guidance as part of the Year 7 Tutor Evening.

We know many parents want to play a full and active role in keeping their children safe online. There are useful guides available on the website to enable you to talk to your child about their online activity:

- Thinkuknow for parents: https://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk/?page_id=445362
- Common social media apps: https://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk/?page_id=2377545
- Online Safety Issues: https://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk/?page_id=2377569

The [Digital Support](#) pages give more information about how the iPad can be used. If you have any questions about digital learning or Firefly (our online platform) please log your query here: https://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk/?page_id=2336773 and our experts will get back in touch with you asap.



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Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many people are feeling a pressure on their well-being at the moment. It is our goal to equip students with personal, social and emotional skills to be able to thrive:

- **Staff Training and Expertise:** We have accessible trained Pastoral Managers and a bespoke Safeguarding and Well-being Lead, Miss Surrage, a Senior Leader trained as Mental Health Lead, Mr Pooley. Access to external wellbeing services as required.
- **Whole School Approaches:** There is a whole school wellbeing package which is delivered via assembly and tutor times which is devised by members of the wellbeing and safeguarding team and provides tutors with knowledge and expertise in the College's wellbeing steps. National well-being events are promoted as are physical, healthy activities for all. There is also individual personalised support as needed.
- **Bespoke Programmes and Inputs:** Year 7 "Smart Moves" programme, Main School and 6th Form tutorial programmes, Student Voice surveys and action, Wellbeing Wednesday workshops and visiting motivational speakers, already planned for Term 2 for different groups which include:
 - *6th Form visit to George the Poet*
 - *Kathryn Burn (The Apprentice) on confidence and resilience as an entrepreneur*
 - *Anna Hemmings MBE (World Champion/Olympian Kayaking) on success, confidence and self-perception*
 - *Diana Award Anti-Bullying training for Values Leaders*

Due to capacity these speakers may not be available to all students, however please do speak to your child's Form Tutor or Pastoral Manager if you would like to find out more about any of these aspects, ensure they have access to this input or feel they may need additional support.

College Support with Cost of Living Increases

The economic pressures will be affecting us all in a range of ways. It is important that we are as open and responsive as we are able to be given the restraints. Our position as a public sector organisation means our ability to step in and support is limited - we also know many families will not need or even want additional support; the College is itself facing increased bills and unfunded costs which will mean our budgets are stretched even further, however, we are mindful of helping where we can and where it is wanted. Attached to this letter are some actions we are taking which may help. Please contact us if you feel your child would benefit from some additional support.

Vaping in School

NHS Digital data last month showed the proportion of 11-15-year-olds classed as e-cigarette users increased to 9% in 2021, up from 6% in 2018. It is illegal in the UK to sell such products to under-18s. Long-term health effects of vaping are relatively unknown. Vaping on school premises nationally is on the rise with schools taking various approaches.

Heathfield Community College is a no-smoking site and we take a zero-tolerance approach to vapes (as a banned item) with vigilant duty staff and awareness as well as reminding students of our position. Responses can include measures such as parental contact, bag or locker searches including random searches. Anyone found with a vape is issued with an appropriate sanction, anyone using a vape is issued with an escalated sanction. The nature of the sanction will range depending on the circumstances.

Please discuss the issues and risks associated with vaping with your child, if you would like support to do so we can signpost information and guidance. Please contact us if you are concerned about the wellbeing or health of your child.

Thank you again for all your help and support. The feedback from our Open Evening and Open Mornings has been fantastic and speaks about:

- *the quality of teaching and learning,*
- *the rich breadth of provision and opportunity,*
- *a calm and purposeful environment and*
- *really positive staff student relationships.*

In particular the prefects who escort the tours have been outstanding in their confidence and ability to engage with parents and students, providing a warm and informative welcome. They are impressive role models.

It is the collective and collaborative effort that makes the College a safe and enjoyable environment for all, we may all have to work a little harder to ensure that is maintained in difficult times but we believe there will continue to be much to celebrate about our young people that will give them security and optimism.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher

Highlights:

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@Heathfield_CC) for live updates of student activities and achievements.

[Latest News](#) on the website offers copies of all press releases about students' stories and successes.

Train to Teach: Please see our website for [Autumn Teacher Training Open Evening](#) details

Diary Dates

Tuesday 11 October	Year 7 Wider Curriculum Day
Thursday 13 October	Year 7 & 12 Parent/Tutor Evening
Friday 14 October	Queen Elizabeth II Commemoration Day
Monday 17 October	Year 11 Wider Curriculum Day - Plumpton or University of Sussex
Thursday 20 October	Sixth Form Open Evening
Friday 21 October	End of Term 1
Monday 31 October	Start of Term 2
Tuesday 1 November	Pre-loved uniform sale

College Support with Cost of Living Increases

Entitlement to Free School Meals: A Free School Meal is a statutory benefit available to school-aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits. Currently a school meal costs £2.45 so over 40 weeks of the school year that is a *potential saving of £490.00*. Being registered for Free School Meals can lead to a range of other support so is well worth exploring details and [checking your eligibility](#).

Pre-loved Uniform Supplies/Lost Property: Replacing lost or outgrown uniform/kit does not have to create added pressure as our “Lost Property” is open every lunchtime for students to check; please do try and make sure items are named so we can return them as soon as possible.

SOHCC also offer a range of pre-loved uniform and provide regular points of sale in the term for affordable replacements. The next sale is on Tuesday 1 November 2022 at 3.20pm.

Absorbing Costs: For Design Technology and Art this year the cost of materials has risen considerably but we have absorbed this within school budgets rather than passing it on to parents; DT and Art contributions therefore remain at the same level as in previous years. We have increased the number and range of free activities in Enrichment Week 2023 by absorbing some of the costs within existing budgets.

The Heathfield Experience provides trips that all students are encouraged to go on for their wider cultural entitlement. But trip letters will show how to access help on an individual basis if needed, payment plans or support are available.

Planning Costs and Support for Families: There is central [advice from the government](#) on a range of matters for households which may be worth exploring. However, we are mindful of our collective responsibility to avoid surprises or unexpected costs:

BELF: We deliberately chose our iPad lease provider as they are able to provide support for those who may struggle to make payments, this must be a direct approach to the company as we are unable to do this on your behalf but there is evidence that they are able and willing to help.

Enrichment Week: We have significantly increased the number of free or low-cost activities this year and will run payment schemes for larger expenses to spread the cost. We have reduced the number of larger, more expensive trips for this year. Details will be released early next week to allow time for any payment plans to be agreed.

Sanitary/Hygiene Support: As a school we are provided with basic sanitary support for female students to avoid ‘hygiene poverty’. We have decided to extend this to provide basic hygiene supplies for both genders (eg: shower gel, shampoo, or other items as required). Students or parents can contact pastoral managers confidentially for more information, all products will be discreetly supplied.

We will continue to communicate and discuss with SOHCC and other parent groups what else we can facilitate that would help our community support each other at this time.