

End of Christmas Term Newsletter

Dear parents, carers and friends,

As we head into our Christmas break, it is the right time to reflect on an unusual term, pick out some of the fantastic things that have been going on and let you know about some important changes to our 'bubbles' for the term ahead.



In a year where, until recently, world news has been more bad than good, and many in the Kings community have faced significant difficulties, I have been drawn to the wonderful and uplifting book 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse' by Charlie Mackesy. In it, there is a lovely picture of them all facing a big black cloud and contemplating life. "Those are dark clouds," said the Boy. "Yes, but they will move on," said the horse, "the blue sky above never leaves."

For all of us here, our blue sky is the opportunity to work with the young people in our school. Whilst we all see those dark clouds from time to time, the moments of gentle humour, academic progress and bursts of kindness are the breaths of wind that clear them.

We have been mindful of COVID, but not allowed the spectre of the pandemic to dominate our term. As you are aware, we have put in place a rigorous set of measures to reduce risk for students and staff alike. I pay tribute to our students who have followed these measures and to our teachers and support staff who have had to work a little differently this year. As I write this, we have been fortunate enough to have had only a few confirmed cases, and we were able to very quickly identify the very small number of other students who would have to self-isolate as a result. Everything was done quickly, efficiently and with minimum fuss and I am pleased that everyone is well and back in school.



As ever, we look to do extra to ensure safety, and we were pleased to welcome a UVD robot from NESA Robotics to disinfect some of our more complex spaces. This remarkable invention uses UV-C light to kill viruses and is 99.99% effective from within 3 metres. CEO Heath Williams, who is a former Kings parent, enjoyed coming back to the school and re-visiting old memories as his robot worked. We were appreciative of his time and generosity as he was kind enough to undertake this without charge.

During the term we were also fortunate enough to spend some (virtual) time with the Countess of Wessex as she met with three of our female students as part of National Science Day. As you would expect, she was impressed with the manner in which they spoke, the experiences that have enjoyed and the plans they have for their future. The session was part of a wider visit to our partners at the University of Surrey and we were introduced to the Countess by acclaimed physicist and media personality Jim Al-Khalili.

We have also spoken with our local MP, Angela Richardson, and took the opportunity to discuss the importance of providing Free School Meals in the holidays and the increasing pressures on school funding. We look forward to welcoming our MP in person as COVID restrictions allow so she can meet some of our students and see first hand the many great things happening at Kings.

Reporting a COVID case before December 24th for Track and Trace purposes

Should your child test positive for COVID after the term ends, but before December 24th, please ensure that you email Mr McKenzie (a.mckenzie@kingscollegeguildford.com) directly as he will have to work with Track and Trace. Please include the date when symptoms first started and the date of the positive test.

Bubble changes from January 2021

This term we have run Upper and Lower school bubbles. This has broadly worked very well and we believe it helped our new cohort of Year 7 students to settle in.

Now they are well settled, we have decided that after Christmas, we will be changing the composition of our bubbles. This will allow greater opportunities for peer mentoring, paired reading and student leadership, as well as helping a little with some of the challenges of the limiting factors of zoning rooms for particular year groups. Essentially this means switching the bubbles that Year 8 and Year 10 are in. Other year groups will be unaffected.

To that effect, Bubble A, will include Years 7 and 10 and be based on the DT corridor side of the school. Students will enter through the student entrance by the library.

Bubble B will include Years 8, 9 and 11 and be based on the main canteen side of the school. Students will enter through the student entrance by the cloakroom.

Homework club

Homework club will return for Years 7 and 8 after Christmas. Year 7 will continue to be in the library, with Year 8 moving to the canteen where there will be some IT facilities that can be accessed.

As it is a staffed space specifically for students who require academic support in completing their work, or where families need the facility for childcare purposes, we would ask that students make sure that the space is reserved for studies rather than seen as a social space. We have decided that we will no longer be allowing students to use their mobile phones during this time, so focus can be on work. If students need to contact home to organise logistics or check in, we would ask that they step outside of homework club to do so.

Should students in other year groups need to access homework club for specific reasons, please contact Mr Ferguson (d.ferguson@kingscolleageguildford.com) to let him know.

Student Council

This term we have appointed our new Student Council for the year. We would like to congratulate all the students that applied for the roles, as reading their applications showed how much they cared about their school community and their interest in making positive changes. The Head Students and Prefects were appointed following a round of challenging interviews with Mr McKenzie and Mrs Robberts. The groups have been lucky enough to complete virtual training through the University of Surrey to support the development of leadership skills and to focus their ideas and planning for their projects for the year ahead.

The student council organised donations to support our local foodbank and we were delighted with the response which has meant we have been able to support a number of people in our community at this very tough time.

Head Students

We are proud to announce that Head Boy and Head Girl for this year are Thuan Vu and Hannah Martin. They will be supported by their Deputies Jasmine Young, Kayleigh North and Jack Hilton-Coombs. Their initial tasks will be to lead the subcommittees in their first projects.



Prefects

Our Prefects were particularly impressive in interview and we have appointed a group of students that are keen to help the younger students at Kings develop both emotionally and academically. Their first project has involved creating 'Ask the Prefect' boxes to allow Lower School students to submit questions that they can answer. In the new year they plan to look for further opportunities to mentor the younger students.

Subcommittees

We continue to run four subcommittees focused on Wellbeing, Community, Eco, and Diversity. This term students have already updated their Diversity boards around the school to provide information for the rest of the school; launched their food bank collections by recording a Zoom presentation for the student body and writing home to parents to inform them of their project; collected and published posters around school to support students in the run up to exams using wise words from older students on how to approach the exam; and planned how to secure funding for composting resources to ensure that as a school we are recycling food waste effectively.

Lower School Ambassadors

This year we have appointed Lower School Ambassadors to ensure that our Lower School students have a voice within the student leadership team. They have been busy training and working with Miss Trott on ideas for their first projects which have included improving school displays and how they can raise funds to develop break time spaces for all students. The Ambassadors will be working alongside the University of Surrey and Miss Trott to produce an exciting resource which will then be given to schools across Surrey, Berkshire, and Hampshire as well as to be used by the university in their school and college events. Students will be producing a 'Careers and Subject Dictionary'.

Extra-curricular Clubs

We are pleased to inform you that extra-curricular clubs which we believe we can run in a COVID safe fashion will return in January. These clubs and societies will be published in the first week back as we respond to any changes that occur in guidance over Christmas.



Sponsored 5km run

Following lockdown our PE department decided the biggest challenge faced by students was they had not had a chance to work on their fitness since lockdown began back in March. So we came up with the idea of the 'Kings Lockdown to 5K'. A charity run that would see the students train for half a term and then run the full 5k at the end of the term before the Christmas break. This would boost their fitness levels and improve their enjoyment of exercise again. All students voted on where their sponsorship money would go and Shooting Stars Children's

Hospices was the clear winner with 50% of the money raised going to their important work. The other half will go towards branded water bottles for all students. So far, more than £2500 has been raised in sponsorship, with more continuing to come in. Thank you to all runners and sponsors.

Health, Relationships and Sex Education at Kings College (PSHE)

From September 2020, the Department for Education has made the teaching of Health, Relationships and Sex Education statutory in all schools. Kings College is fully supportive of this and believe that in order to live a happy adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships.

PSHE is currently taught at Kings through a series of drop down specialist days over the course of the academic year. Feedback regarding PSHE days has been extremely positive from both students and parents.

In order to view our PSHE policy and curriculum map for PSHE, please visit www.kingscollegeguildford.com. In addition to this, you may wish to read the statutory guidance documents:

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Understanding Relationships, Sex and Health Education at your Child's Secondary School: A Guide for parents

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907640/RSE_secondary_schools_guide_for_parents.pdf

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Before granting any such request, parents and children are required to attend a meeting with the Principal to discuss concerns and clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. A parent can request to withdraw their child up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

Your curriculum queries, opinions, and any contributions will enable us to further develop and shape our PSHE curriculum offer. Please direct these to office@kingscollegeguildford.com.

We look forward to receiving your feedback and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support.

Eikon update

Eikon continue to provide fantastic support to students in a wide range of creative ways. This term six students have had the chance for therapeutic work with horses at Mane Chance. Yoga sessions continue to be popular, but have switched online due to COVID restrictions. Our partners at RHS Wisley have given us tickets for their Glow event, and we have been delighted to pass these on to families so they can enjoy this together.



Attendance

Kings College Guildford continues to work hard to ensure that all pupils attend school. We work alongside parents to ensure that where pupils have a high rate of absence we quickly work together to ensure the child's attendance rises. We continue to use the help of external agencies to assist us in improving attendance, such as the school nurse, social workers and the Inclusion Officer.

Even with the challenges, complexities and worries at present, around 70% of students in the school have an attendance of over 95%. Please do keep ensuring that your children are in and on time every day. This year has taught us just how precious every minute in school is.

As ever, I must remind parents/carers that if they take their children out of school without authority, they will be liable to receive a penalty notice. Currently the amount payable under a penalty notice is £60.00 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days. Thereafter the amount increases to £120.00 if paid between 21 and 28 days. If the penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority will consider a prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Please note that penalty notices are issued per parent/carer per child so a family of two parents and two children will receive 4 penalty notices.

Uniform

Following a meeting between representatives of the student leadership team and Mr McKenzie, we have agreed that we will add leggings purchased from the Kings uniform shop to the list of PE uniform items that students can choose to wear.

These Kings branded leggings are specifically designed for sport and our student representatives have agreed with the brand we have managed to source. They will be available from mid-January and we will write to parents when we have stock in once prices are confirmed.

It is important that you are aware that this item is available in addition to current PE uniform, and there is no requirement for purchasing this item. Students may continue to wear their current shorts or school tracksuit bottoms if they wish.

Unfortunately, no leggings purchased from any other source will be allowed to be worn.

End of term

The term ends at 12.00 on Friday 18th December. In the new year, staff return on Monday 4th January for INSET. Students return on Tuesday 5th January 2021, on Week 2 of their timetable.

On behalf of all of the team at Kings, I wish you all a fantastic Christmas break.



Alastair McKenzie
Principal

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