

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

16th January 2025

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope it's not too late to wish you a happy new year. Although the Christmas holiday now seems all but a distant memory, I hope that you had an enjoyable and restful time. It's always great to see how genuinely happy students are to return to school and we've certainly "hit the ground running" getting straight back into rehearsals and concerts, hosting visitors and masterclasses and, for Years 11 and 13, preparing for mock exams next week (more about this below). Politically, things are still a little unsettled. As MDS families will be aware there is a transitional arrangement in place regarding the Government's VAT policy but, as yet, there is no clear or confirmed position for September 2025. We are continuing to lobby both the Department for Education and HM Treasury to ensure that we get the best outcome in the upcoming Spending Review and we have many influential advocates working on our behalf across parliament and the House of Lords. Whilst it would be a fair assumption that, at the very least, the transitional arrangements are made permanent, nothing in politics is ever guaranteed until it's guaranteed - and even then (as well we know) things can change. As soon as there is definitive news to report on this front, I will pass this on. Sadly, I see no possibility of any changes to the arrangements for non-MDS families.

Mobile Phones

Those who were with us last March will remember that we implemented a new approach to the significant problem of pervasive mobile phone use. Our approach adopted three "tiers":

- **Years 7-9:** all phones were to be handed into the House Office at the beginning of the working day. No access was permitted until the end of the working day or by special arrangement with the Houseparent.
- **Year 10-11:** were permitted to have their phones with them but on the understanding that they

may not be used at any point during the working day, including lunch and break times.

- **Sixth Form:** responsible use was permitted at all times except in lessons.

We have now run this approach for two full terms and I am pleased to say that the first and third of these "tiers" have worked very well. It has become clear, however, that Years 10-11 are consistently unable to abide by the expectations and have very little (or no!) capacity to self-regulate their phone use. Put simply, as soon as they are not

in a formal lesson situation, they are back on their phones. This is impacting their individual practice sessions during which many are found scrolling rather than practising, and it's also impacting on their private study time. We are also concerned about the impact on their mental health and general wellbeing. Therefore, from Monday 20th January (to coincide with the start of Year 11 mocks) all Year 10 and 11 students will be required to hand their phones into their House Office at the beginning of the working day and may not have access to them until they have completed their last

formal commitment in school. So, to be clear, no student in Years 7-11 will be permitted to have a mobile phone during the school day from Monday 20th January. I am sure all parents share our concerns about this almost addictive

level of use and the potential impact this can have on the progress, development and wellbeing of our young people. I would ask that parents support the school in taking this step and also ensure that students don't try to

sidestep the policy by having a concealed second phone with them. Day students may collect their phone from their House Office when they sign out. Houses will manage periods of use for boarders.

Parent Code of Conduct

As it's the beginning of a new year, I thought it might be helpful to remind all parents that we do now operate with a Parent Code of Conduct which outlines the School's expectations about communication. Our relationships with parents are generally very good - we share a common interest in ensuring the best experience

for our young people, after all. However, as well as having a duty of care to students and to the wider parent community, I also have a duty of care to school staff and should they receive communication (either by email, phone or in person) which is confrontational, aggressive or threatening, the School will take appropriate action to protect them. We

encourage parents to share concerns with us and will always do all we can to address these concerns with you, but this must always be undertaken in a measured and non-confrontational manner.

The Parent Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).

Academic Matters

Reminder: Mock Exams for Years 11 and 13

We would like to remind you that mock exams for Years 11 and 13 will be held next week, starting 20th January. This is an important opportunity for our students to practice taking full exams under proper conditions, helping them prepare for their final exams in the summer.

Earlier in January Ms. Murphy, our Exams Officer, and Mr. Long held an assembly to discuss expectations and provide essential information. Students received their individual exam timetables on 11th December.

To support our students' preparation, all academic teachers have provided revision materials. We encourage students to utilise

these resources effectively and seek any additional support they may need.

We wish all our students the best of luck in their preparation and success in their exams.

Coursework Deadlines

We are reaching out to ask for your support in ensuring that all students submit their coursework on time and to the highest standard. Meeting these deadlines is crucial for teachers to mark and moderate the work according to the requirements set by exam boards.

Key Dates

- We have set internal deadlines for non-exam assessments for **31st March**. These dates are for the final drafts (unless

specified otherwise).

- Exceptions are Art (**31st January**), GCSE Drama (**1st March**) and IGCSE Music (**14th March**) who need to moderate pieces earlier for submission.
- Teachers and subjects may also provide additional deadlines for first drafts if needed.

How You Can Help

- **Encourage Communication:** Please remind your child to inform their teacher of any problems or issues well in advance of the deadlines. This will allow us to address concerns promptly and ensure timely submission.
- **Seek Support:** If your child needs any assistance, please encourage them to

reach out during this term. We are here to help them complete their work on time.

It's important to note that coursework submitted after the

Mental Health Support

Hopefully you will be aware of the school's existing mental health support provision, through which we aim to support the wellbeing of all students. Whether that be through Tutors, Houseparents, the Medical team or our dedicated counsellor, we offer students a wide range of trusted adults that they can reach out to for support. However, sometimes a student may require additional support, or wish to speak to someone outside of the school. GPs can fill this role, and whilst the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is available for those with acute mental health needs, we have now partnered with the [Anna Freud Centre](#), a world-leading mental health charity supporting children and their parents to offer support through their Schools and Colleges Early Support Scheme.

The Schools and Colleges Early Support Service is for young people aged 11-25 experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, like anxiety and low mood, and the trusted adults around them. The Schools and Colleges Early Support Service is the only whole-school online service, delivered by expert practitioners and underpinned

deadlines may not be eligible for submission to the exam boards. Your involvement and encouragement can make a significant difference in helping your child manage their coursework efficiently.

by the latest evidence on preventing mental ill health. They deliver evidence-based, early support to help young people express their needs, find solutions and build practical strategies that will support their wellbeing long-term. Crucially, they collaborate with every young person as an expert in their own life and scaffold help to the trusted adults around them: parents, carers, teachers and school staff.

What is the offer?

- Young people complete 6-8 sessions of 1:1 support. All our support is delivered remotely by a practitioner online.
- The focus is on teaching young people self help strategies, using cognitive behavioural principles that are proven to be highly effective.
- By the end of their sessions, young people will have gained practical tools for dealing with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

What can young people expect from sessions?

- Practitioners use a structured model of guided self-help in sessions.
- Parents and carers are invited to join the first

Thank you for your continued support

session.

- Before sessions begin, outcome measures must be set up by the young person. These will help the practitioner to understand the problems the young person may have been experiencing.
- In the first session, together with the practitioner, the young person will set some goals for what they would like to work on in the sessions.

Logistics of support sessions

- The young person will meet with the same practitioner once a week at the same day and time.
- They can access the sessions at school or at home depending on the time of their regular sessions.

How to refer

- If you would like for your young person to be referred to the Service, please speak to Mrs Mitchell (j.mitchell@purcell-school.org), Mr Szafranski (z.szafranski@purcell-school.org) or the Medical team (medical@purcell-school.org).
- Both young person and parent or carer consent is required before a referral may be submitted by the

school or college.

What happens when a referral has been submitted?

- Their clinical team will review the referral to verify if the Service will be the right kind of support for the young person.
- The structured nature of the brief support offers of the Service means that it is not suitable for young people with more complex mental health needs or significant learning difficulties.
- If the referral is above our


threshold for support, we will notify you as the parent or carer, as well as notifying the school or college. We will provide signposting to more applicable types of support that the young person may benefit from.

Is there anything for us as parents and carers?

- For parents and carers who have a young person in support sessions, the ESS offer a 45-minute session with the practitioner. There is also the option of having a follow up session.

- Parents and carers are welcome to use this session to bring worries and concerns about their young person and the parenting relationship.
- Parents and Carers can contact the practitioner working with their young person to ask for a parent and carer consultation.
- There are also a number of live webinars which you can access as part of the scheme. You can find details of how to sign up for and access these [here](#).

With all good wishes



Paul Bambrough
Principal

