

22nd October 2021

OKEHAMPTON COLLEGE



Newsletter
Issue 2

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Opportunity
Respect
Equity

Highlights

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Duke of Edinburgh's Award
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The Associate Principals' Message; Craig Griffiths, Rebecca Mullins

We hope that you are well, looking forward to half term and the opportunity to spend time with family and friends. You will notice - since we last wrote to you - that we have further developed the newsletter to combine what were the separate pastoral and Principals' newsletters. As previously explained, we are responding to parent and carer feedback, and this forms the next step towards us streamlining our communications with you. We hope that you find this a helpful way for us to share some important events of the final few weeks before the holiday.

Website updates

We previously explained our intention to start updating the website to ensure it contains useful, easily accessible information. This work has started, and we have begun to address points raised by parents and carers. One suggestion was the provision of contact details for all staff. A full staff list, with email addresses can now be found by clicking on the contact tab, which is located on the main menu bar. Additionally, we have also provided the structure and contacts of our curriculum teams. We hope that this clarifies how you can reach individual members of staff to better access the information that you need.

We will continue to work on the website, so please do bear with us.

Important Dates

- 25th October Half Term Holiday
- 1st November Students return to College
- 3rd November Year 6 open morning (by appointment)
- 10th November Year 6 open morning (by appointment)
- 15th-26th November GCSE Mock examinations

Refurbishment...Uniform Expectations...Faculty Review...Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Update on refurbishment of College buildings

The refurbishment work which was planned for the summer holidays and autumn term is now well underway with the repainting of corridors. Works have moved into the second phase with the refurbishment of English classrooms. We will be re-rooming some classes into alternative accommodation for a short time to avoid disrupting learning. These works form part of an important push towards upgrading our facilities and creating a learning environment that students feel proud of, and which they value.

Student voice

We have again taken time to listen to students' views about daily life at the College. Student Councils have fed back that they would like to see the development of leadership opportunities. One suggestion is the training of students as mental health ambassadors. This forms an idea which the College started to explore prior to the pandemic and students are keen to recommit to this approach. We will be liaising with our partner schools in the Trust which have successfully established this programme since it requires appropriate training to ensure students feel fully equipped for this responsibility. It will also complement plans for the Wellbeing Hub to further broaden the College's personal development offer.

Movement around the corridors was also raised by student voice with reference to the organisation of break and lunch time venues. We have increased staff supervision in these areas to assist students as they move through. This is already seeing benefits and students are feeding back to duty staff about how this feels. There is work to do here as we continue to establish one-way systems which guide orderly movement around the site at busy times and which also supports continuing Covid measures. We will be monitoring this closely.

Finally, and overwhelmingly, students have spoken positively about their learning

experience, and how lessons have settled well since we returned to a one-hour structure, which is more typical of a pre-Covid timetable. Faculty leaders and the senior team are now looking very closely at the student learning experience as part of our review processes. More on this below.

Expectations and uniform.

When we last wrote to you, we asked for your support in reminding students about uniform expectations. There has been a noticeable decrease in students wearing hoodies to school. We would like to thank you for your support. It is making all the difference as we work together to raise expectations at the College. Overwhelmingly, students continue to look very smart on their arrival in the mornings.

As part of this ongoing focus, we will continue to remind students that facial piercings are not permitted. Senior staff will greet and remind students on the drive about expectations, and ask that facial piercings are removed. If these items reappear during day, they will be confiscated by staff. Again, could we ask for your support in reinforcing these points with your child to avoid any problems, or confusion on our return after the half term break.

Faculty Review

A significant development for the term is the introduction of faculty review. This involves senior staff and subject teams working closely together to review the quality of teaching and how it supports students' learning. We spend time in classrooms talking with students about their work and learning in individual subjects.

Faculty review is a key means by which the College will continue to support the continuing professional development of its teachers. Reviews will take place each term, and it has never been more important that we undertake this work. Over the last two years students and colleagues have faced so

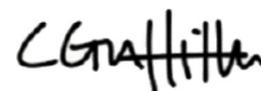
many challenges; consequently, it is crucial that subject teams are supported and best placed to help students in navigating these same challenges.

The remainder of this newsletter provides some reflections on events of the half term, such as the 3-day expedition for Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, messages from our Heads of Year, and news of Year 11 careers-based events. The reinstatement of these face-to-face events is so important to the development of our students since they help to build character and offer vital consideration of their next steps.

Although there is additional planning involved to ensure that these events take place safely, as always, the professionalism and commitment of our staff makes it possible to reinstate these opportunities. We thank them for their continued efforts.

All that remains to say is that we wish you a pleasant and enjoyable break, and we look forward to welcoming the students back for the new half term.

Best wishes,



Craig Griffiths and Rebecca Mullins
(Associate Principals)



Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award

October 1st started as out in a slightly soggy way, but soon turned to pleasant sunshine as 59 Year 10 students departed on day one of their 3-day expedition for the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Day 1 was a local circular route, with students in their chosen groups completing their own independent route. Out walking, responsible for their own navigation for 6 hours was a great test of their skills, resilience and was, by all accounts, a great day.

Day 2 & 3 were a much more challenging affair and will go down in history as a weekend to remember. Biblical rain soaked students, staff and parents as they congregated in Chagford car park ready for the off and continued throughout much of the day, only abating as students arrived at the campsite.

The walk itself required a good level of fitness – the areas the students walked were hilly – and the severity of the inclines was made more testing due to the equipment they were expected to carry – think tents, stoves, clothing, and food for 2 days.

It was a pleasant surprise when the rain stopped, and we had a dry evening and morning at the campsite. The students campcraft was excellent – although some of the culinary options were less appetising.

Day 2 started bright and breezy but soon turned wild, wintery, and very wet. Yet, spirits remained high as our 9 different teams made their way from the campsite back to College. Another 6 hours in the rain showed the resilience, determination, and positive attitude from all our students.

An amazing experience and positivity despite the adversity – all Bronze Students, you were a credit to the College and should be incredibly proud of your achievement. Well done.

...Your Head of Year Team...



Mrs Wheeler

Head of

Year 7

Congratulations on completing your first half term at Okehampton College. It has been lovely to watch you all settle in and immerse yourselves in life here at the College. You all look so smart in the mornings when we line up for tutor time- keep up the excellent effort with uniform, equipment, masks and being Ready, Respectful and Safe.

One of the highlights of this half term was watching you all get involved in the Sponsored Walk, what an achievement to walk so far after your first full week back. I was lucky enough to walk with Mr Bailey's tutor group who were a fabulous group, encouraging each other, offering support and with a good range of sweets on offer too.

In your first weeks you might have experienced one – or more - of the following: got lost, lost your PE kit, made new friends, tried a club, worked your way through the paninis on offer in the canteen and got lost again!

All these are part of starting secondary school and hopefully you're feeling more at home now we are halfway through the term. Please speak to me or your tutor if you need any help or guidance as we move into the second half of the autumn term.

Enjoy half term and have a good rest.

Mrs Wheeler



Mrs Derks

Head of

Year 8

I am delighted to report that Year 8 are doing themselves and the College proud – they've dug deep and have turned some challenging behaviours around and are blossoming both socially and academically. It's wonderful to see and makes my job as Head of Year 8 so worthwhile. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank my outstanding tutor team who go the extra mile without question every single time and you – the parents and carers - who have been incredibly supportive; it is very much appreciated.

Indeed, as the Autumn slowly turns to Winter, it is important to focus on the health and well-being of our students and their families. If news reports are to be believed, we are set to face a tough Winter - one that will see the cost of living spiralling. Now more than ever, is the time to pull together and work as a community – both at College and in our wider environment. In such difficult times – and Covid still very much with us - we need to make sure that we reach out to each other for help and treat one another with kindness, since we know not of another's struggle. We have plenty of useful resources here for students to tap into and plenty of lunchtime and after school clubs they can get involved with to keep their minds and bodies exercised.

I'd like to wish you all a wonderful half term holiday.

Ms Derks



Year 11

It's almost half-term and before we send you all off for a well-deserved week's rest, I wanted to say that I'm really impressed at how you've come together as a year group and as a team to help and support our school community. There has been a marked improvement in attitudes, and it has been heartening to have so many positive conversations with you.

I just want to take this opportunity to reflect on the expectations within school – and with a particular focus on 'Respect'. It is important that we all look out for each other and are kind to one another - even if you have a difference in opinion. I have seen so many of you helping out Year 7's in the first few weeks of this half term and it's this sort of positive behaviour I'd love to see more of.

For example, let's see even more of you asking Year 7 students if they are okay, do they know where they are going? You are a role model and it's important to set an example for your younger peers (it wasn't that long ago that you were in the same position!). Kind and encouraging interactions with each other can make someone's day, so let's see more of this and be inclusive to everyone in our school community.

We do need to think about the impact our words and actions have on our peers, parents, and community, so I am asking that you really think about the comments and decisions you are making.

Let's continue to see a kind and respectful year group as we come back refreshed after half term.

Mrs Hodgson



It has been an absolute pleasure to see the Year 10's arrive back at school and begin the new academic year with such a positive attitude. After missing so much of school life last year – learning and social - they have adapted well to the new routines and expectations that Key Stage 4 has presented.

Last weekend, several of our Year 10 students braved the terrible storms and successfully completed part of their Duke of Edinburgh award. Most students hobbled into school with sore feet, head colds and a tired but proud grin on their faces - well done to all those that took part and thank you to the staff that supported them and made it possible.

A special mention must go to one of our Year 10 students, Holly. Over the summer, Holly became the 'British National Novice Champion in Show Jumping'. This is an incredible achievement and one that Holly has worked hard for. She has balanced her school life with her busy programme of tours and training and taken it all in her stride with modesty and determination, we are all incredibly proud of her – congratulations Holly.

Lastly, I am looking forward to giving a 'Hot Chocolate Reward' to two tutor groups next week. JAD and SLD have shown impressive conduct, a true sense of social responsibility and community over the past few weeks and this deserves to be rewarded. Well done everyone and keep it going Year 10!

Mrs Teixeira



Rewards and Recognition.....



Mrs Hodgson

Head of

Year 9



Mrs Teixeira

Head of

Year 10

...Your Head of Year Team...

...Rewards and Recognition...



Mr Wilson

Head of

Year 11

It is incredible to think we're nearing the end of the first half term. That leaves just over 2 terms until our Year 11 students start their final exams! As part of that preparation, our thoughts turn to Mock exams which commence on Monday 15th November and last for a period of 2 weeks.

I'm delighted to say, the core subject intervention sessions during tutor time are proving hugely successful and it is wonderful to see the high levels of engagement from most students. This targeted intervention in core subjects, should help students to better understand the format of each exam paper and increase their level of confidence within those subjects. Indeed, many of the skills taught are transferrable across the breadth of the curriculum and should also support students in their preparation for the mocks.

I am mindful that many of our students are starting to consider their options beyond Year 11. There will be an opportunity for all tutor groups to visit the College Post-16 Centre after half term to look at what choices exist locally. This should also help them with their decision making, particularly given that each student will have different thoughts for the future.

To support this further, many of our Year 11s have already had a 1:1 career appointment with our Independent Careers Adviser - Becky Harvey. Becky intends to meet with all students over the coming months to ensure they have a clear pathway for the next academic year. In addition to this, tutor groups will spend some tutor time this term with Mrs Luckhurst to explore the use of 'Careers Pilot', the National Careers Service, who provide careers information, advice and guidance.

Finally, Careers South West will be delivering an assembly in early December to outline possible routes in to Apprenticeships. This is something that I know many students will look forward to seeing.

I would like to finish by saying, ' Nothing is impossible. The word itself says, I'm possible'. Audrey Hepburn.

I would like to wish you all a restful Half term break.

Mr Wilson



Mrs Hachipuka

Pastoral Lead

SLT

Being rewarded is always wonderful – and it's something staff look forward to. We would like to recognise and reward as many students as possible each day for their efforts and conduct in - and outside - the classroom. To find out what pupils would really like, we'll be seeking views from students in each year group on how they'd like our Rewards programme to look.

We will continue with our bronze, silver, and gold badges – there are a good deal of students already close to achieving their first badge.

The following number of achievement points are required to secure the awards:

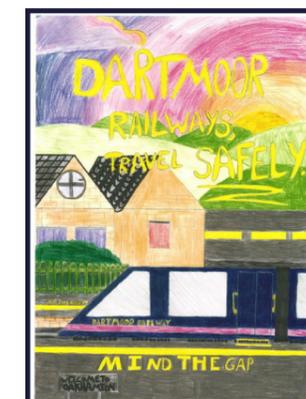
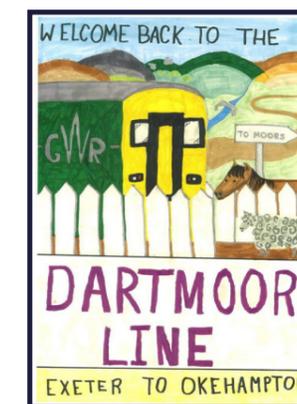
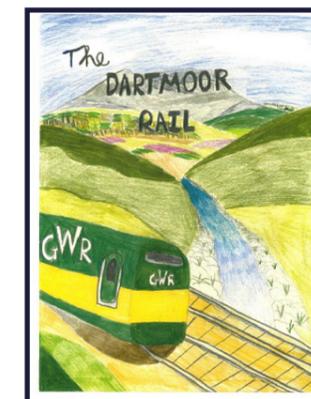
- Bronze - 250
- Silver - 500
- Gold - 750

We really enjoy presenting these badges in assemblies and in tutor time.

Tutor groups and individuals will be awarded with celebratory breakfasts, lunch passes and praise postcards plus many more recognitions for your efforts, progress, and conduct.

Be sure to inform your tutor of any good ideas you have for the development of our Rewards programme.

Mrs Hachipuka
Pastoral Lead

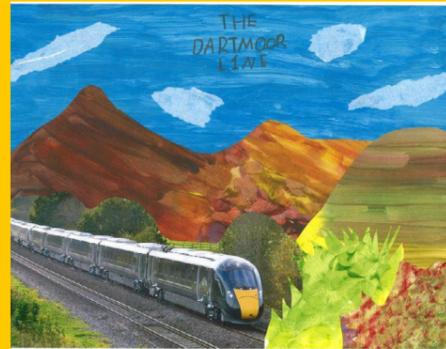


See over for more student Art Work....



...Student Competition for the New Dartmoor Line...

Winner!



The Oke Rail Committee approached Okehampton College Art department to assist with creating artwork for the celebration – and commemoration of - the 150th anniversary of the railway in Okehampton and the new Dartmoor line.

Across all year groups, students have been working on a series of Art works; a poster based on the work of Becky Bettesworth, and a clay piece based on the workings of a train. The final pieces were presented at a 2-day celebration weekend that took place on the 2nd and 3rd October, organised by the OkeRail Committee.

We were blown away with the amazing work that our students produced; thank you so much to every student that entered. Here is some of the amazing work. You are very welcome to visit the work since it will be exhibited at the station and surrounding areas for the next few weeks.

Congratulations to the winners, we will be in touch for you to collect your prizes.

- 1st - Emily Wright Year 7
- 2nd - Abi Graves Year 7 & Isabelle Shingleton Year 9
- 3rd - Sylvie H Year 7
- 4th - Rosie Dixon Year 9

News from the Music Faculty

Our Music department has been buzzing since the beginning of the school year as we have welcomed our students back into the world of live music-making. Lunchtime enrichment clubs are growing and include: Orchestra, Big Band, Choir, Little Big Band and our new String Ensemble. Come and talk to your Music teacher if you'd like to be involved.

In addition to our enrichment and classroom teaching, we offer a full complement of instrumental tuition, this is provided by our professional team of visiting peripatetic instrumental teachers. Full details can be found on our website [here](http://www.okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk) or email jteixeira@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk to get in touch with us if you have any questions.

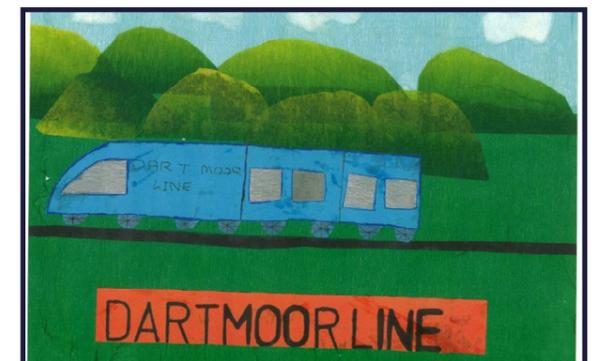
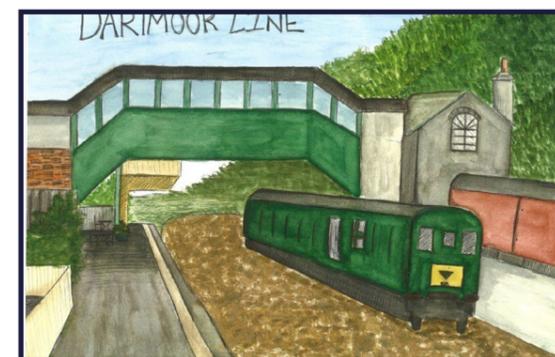
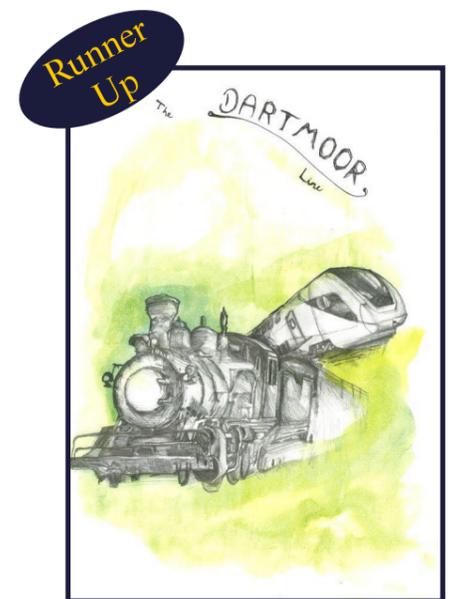
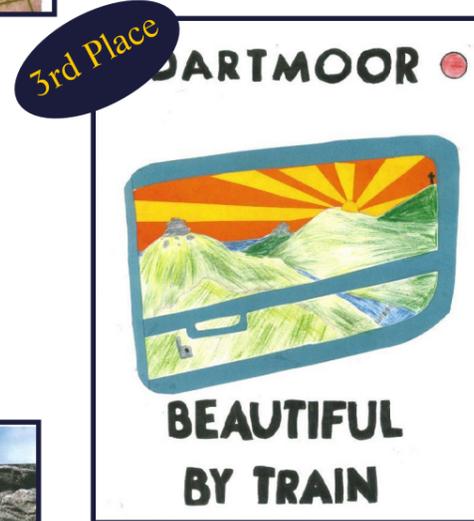
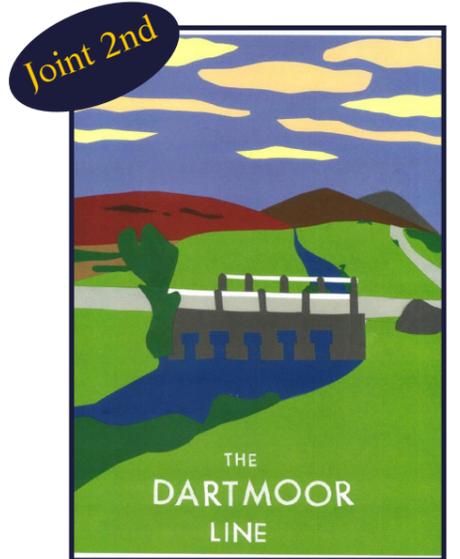
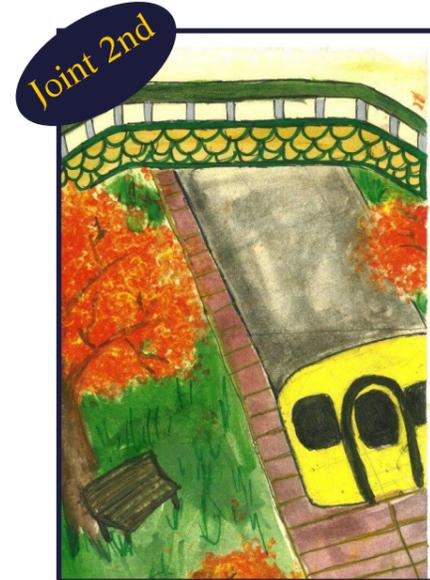
This Saturday, the 23rd October is our community fayre weekend. As a part of this we are encouraging as many students, parents, and grandparents as possible to bring their instrument (however dusty!) along to the Community Orchestra 'big play'. This is the first time that we will be putting something of this size together, all instrumentalists are welcome to join us for an afternoon of live music-making. We are rehearsing in the Octagon Theatre from 2pm-5pm and we have a performance spot at 7pm in the Sports Hall in the evening. More information can be obtained from robwillis.eco@outlook.com or jteixeira@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk
Mrs J Teixeira and Mrs J Wooster

Join our New Community Orchestral Rehearsal & Performance

Bring your instrument!
 Classical, Pop, Show Tunes, Movie Themes
 Play as little or as much as you can...
 All welcome. All ages.

Saturday 23 October 2021
 Rehearsal 14:00-17:00 @The Octagon Theatre, Okehampton College
 Performance Spot 19:00-20:00

Part of Rural Craft Fair & Community Event
 contact robertwillis.eco@outlook.com for more info



Live Music...String Quartet

Live music became something of a distant memory during lockdown – with some of our youngest students never having experienced the sheer joy of listening to music played right in front of them. That changed on Thursday 30th September when, having ensured COVID safety measures were in place, we were delighted to offer a live concert for some of our Year 7 pupils along with our GCSE and A Level music students.

The wonderful Kyan Quartet from the Royal Academy of Music in London came to play for us along with Graham Oppenheimer – the world-renowned violist who has appeared in chamber collaborations with Yehudi Menuhin amongst others as well as being a Senior Chamber Music Tutor at Chetham's School of Music and hosting masterclasses internationally. He frequently broadcasts on radio throughout the world, from the BBC in the UK - to the ABC in Australia.

During the 60-minute concert, students were immersed in an entertaining, whirlwind tour of classical music and the sound of live strings. They learned about British and German composers as well as taking part in a 'guess that tune' game, which saw them beat their teachers. Students behaved impeccably and asked some wonderful questions. When asked, "What did you learn?", one student replied,



"Well, I like Classical Music apparently!", another student quite profoundly observed "Benjamin Britten was a pacifist, but I felt his music was full of anger".

This workshop/concert was made possible by 'The Two Moors Festival' Outreach work, fully funded by Devon Education Music Hub and for that we're very grateful. We're hoping to offer more opportunities for students to hear first-class live music at the College in the coming months.



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