

1st October 2021

# OKEHAMPTON COLLEGE



Newsletter  
Issue 1

Community  
Opportunity  
Respect  
Equity

## Highlights

Sponsored Walk  
Open Evening  
New Routines

### The Associate Principals' Message; Craig Griffiths, Rebecca Mullins

We hope that you - and your families - are safe and well and that the new school year has started positively.

As we write, the first half term is passing quickly, so we would like to share some of the key events that have taken place thus far - alongside the messages and expectations which we have revisited with our students.

This is the first newsletter of 2021-22 and you may notice that we have made some changes to its appearance in response to some very helpful feedback about what you would like to see. We will be working further on the content of our newsletters as well as the College's wider communication throughout the year. Our aim is to work with you to develop the clarity and frequency of information we share about the daily life of the College. In time, this will involve updating the College website to support streamlining of information, useful contacts, and communication about upcoming events. So please bear with us as we work towards this.

Important Dates

25 October 2021 - Half Term Holiday

1st November 2021 - Students return to College

# Sponsored Walk...Open Evening...



## Start of Term and New Routines

Year 7 students have settled in well. You may have heard that we started the mornings of the first week by gathering each year group together in designated outside areas and in register order. This went extremely well. It supported calm and orderly starts and helped students to understand expectations so that they were quickly back into College routines.

Indeed, it is these routines that helped students understand our fire drill procedures, which are now relocated to the cricket field which have aided improvements in both organisation and supervision. We hope that you will agree that these daily routines were reassuring for our new Year 7 students who benefitted from a positive start when joining the typically busy life of a large secondary school. Throughout the year we may return to these procedures for individual year groups if it is felt that it would be beneficial to support students in focussing on the learning purpose of the day.

In the summer term, we wrote to you about introducing alternating lunch sittings for different year groups. Students have been gradually adapting to these new arrangements and their student voice groups are feeding back about their experience of lunchtimes. We are listening carefully to their views to ensure that lunchtimes are enjoyable social times when they can be together in pleasant surroundings. There is more work to do here with embedding habits which ensure the flow of students is smooth and orderly. This will require the continued maturity and responsibility of our students to make this a success - but first steps are in place, and we are looking to broaden what is on offer at lunchtimes.

## Year 7 Settling in

It has been wonderful to welcome our new Year 7 cohort over the last few weeks. We are thrilled that they have made a fantastic start to life here at College. We've been really impressed with their uniform, motivated work ethic and kind manners.

It's been a busy start to the Autumn term with many activities to aid students with getting to know their peers and teachers. Some of these have included a 'getting to know you' tutor task as well as our traditional whole school moorland sponsored walk – all of which have aided a wonderful transition to College life.



## Uniform

We would like to thank you for your support of our expectations around uniform. Overwhelmingly, students looked extremely smart on their return to College. A reminder that students are required to wear blazers in lessons - and moving around the school from lesson to lesson - unless their teacher allows them to be removed for comfort in class.

Okehampton students are expected to be always smart and presentable. This means wearing all appropriate uniform items such as blazers, ties, and correct footwear etc., when in school. Hoodies are not permitted. Students will be reminded on arrival at College by staff on the drive - and by tutors during tutor time. If hoodies reappear during the school day, they will be confiscated. This is also still the case for mobile phones. We ask that you remind and reinforce these points with your child now to avoid any problems - or confusion - later in the year.

## Sponsored Walk

We were delighted that the College was able to return to its great tradition of the whole school sponsored walk on Dartmoor. This took place at the end of the second week. The walk is a long-held flagship community event, which encourages as many students as possible to take part - in keeping with our inclusive ethos. Over 1300 students participated to raise money for their chosen charities: Devon Air Ambulance, the British Heart Foundation, and the Malala Fund.

On the day, the sun shone, and it was fantastic to see Year 7 and Year 8 students taking part so enthusiastically on their first ever walk. For those students who were unable to participate this year, they spent a productive day at College engaged in learning activities. Staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the time they spent with these students. So, huge thanks to the many staff who made the return of this wonderful event possible either by leading our students on Dartmoor, or by supporting them in College. Special thanks must go to Mr Bailey, who worked tirelessly to organise and make the event such a success. Lastly, congratulations to every student who took part in the event and raised over £7,000. The students were a credit to the College.



Thank you for all of your support - we are extremely proud of the spirit in which the whole community has supported and participated in this event.

## Year 6 Open Evening

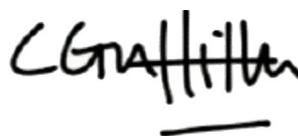
During this last week we were delighted to be able to open the College to Year 6 children and their families. You will know that the Year 6 Open Evening is an important date in our calendar where we start the work of building positive relationships with our new students and their families. You will recall that we were unable to do this last year because of Covid-19. So, it was never more important for staff to be able to welcome everyone and explain the impressive range of subjects and wider enrichment opportunities we offer. Our students played a key role in the success of the evening as they led groups of children and parents around the College. They also helped subject teams to explain, from the student perspective, how learning takes place in College. The care, maturity, and leadership which they demonstrated was commented on by parents and staff alike.

It is worth mentioning that as result of Covid-19, we reorganised the evening into a choice of scheduled talks from ourselves as Associate Principals, and a series of smaller, manageable group tours. Initial

feedback was positive, helpful, and appreciative of the efforts of staff and students. We will be learning from this and feeding it into next year's offer as part of the development work, we are undertaking. All that remains to be said is thank you to the students and staff who represented the work of the College.

Finally, going forward, we are planning to use this newsletter more frequently to let you know about important events and the direction of our review and development work during the academic year. In the meantime, we hope that the year is a successful, enjoyable, and productive time for you, the students, and staff of Okehampton College.

Best wishes,



**Craig Griffiths and Rebecca Mullins**  
**Associate Principals**



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