

I am sharing my weekly briefing with you all early this week in light of some concerns which have been raised around the College from some on social media. I also want to reassure you about how seriously we take all concerns, and how we are working as a college team to continue to progress on our improvement journey.

Our Improvement Journey

You may know that concerns were raised on social media about behaviour at social times. To better understand these issues, we have reached out to families and students to learn more about their concerns. We have been grateful for the chance to hear firsthand from parents about important issues during these discussions.

Firstly, I would like to say that we are always very disappointed to hear of any instances in which any of our young people may have had experiences that do not reflect the caring and supportive environment that we strive to create for every student at the College. We will continue to evaluate the measures we have in place to ensure that all our young people feel that they are listened to and cared for.

Working with our young people to ensure they receive the highest quality of support and education is something we as a College are fully committed to, and the ultimate aim of the College's improvement work remains to ensure that we are creating an environment in which all feel like they belong.

As part of this commitment, we are already taking actions to address the issues raised by the end of this week. These include:

- Increased supervision around key areas of the school at social times.
- A series of assemblies to reiterate our shared values and behaviour expectations.
- Increased use of the student voice cycle around the lived experience of our young people. This includes tutor time, and voice groups led by Heads of Year, and the senior teams as part of our monitoring processes.

Beyond these immediate actions, we can also share our medium-term plans.

We will be working with our Sixth Form students to increase their positive presence around the school. You may know that we have already been working to increase visibility of student role models and examples of good behaviour that aligns with the College's expectations and values.

We will now seek to accelerate these plans over the coming weeks and months with particular emphasis on social times.

Additionally, we will be reviewing our pastoral structures to ensure they are best serving our young people. Planning is underway and the discussions of this week have helped us enormously to progress these plans to prioritise the wellbeing and sense of belonging of our students. We will be sharing more information about these plans with you over the coming weeks and months.

What we want the adults to know

I personally would like to take this opportunity to encourage parents with any concerns to raise them with the College directly. Working through questions and problems together will always help us to find ways forward.

The challenges we have all faced in recent times could not have made this clearer. Please do make use of the following formal and informal opportunities to speak with me and the team directly:

- E-mail – admin@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk
- Phone – (01837) 650910
- Parents Evenings (Year 8 tonight, Year 7 next week and Year 11 the week after).
- Parent information events that are scattered throughout the year.
- Through our Governors.

If there are parents and carers who feel they are in a position to volunteer some time at the college, we would love to hear from you. If this is something you might be able to offer, please do contact admin@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk

If you would like to visit the college, please get in touch via phone on (01837) 650910 or via email admin@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk and we will arrange it.

What we want the students to know

All students should speak with their tutor, one of their teachers or a member of the Safeguarding Team if they ever have a worry or concern. There is also the Whisper App and support e-mail address for students to use to reach out for support. We would also encourage students to utilise student voice activities which take place throughout every half term in tutor time to share their thoughts so everyone can be heard. Feedback from these sessions is shared directly to Senior Leaders and Governors and it is a valuable resource for our team to ensure we are supporting our students in every possible way.

Our Promise

We will continue to work hard every day to care for our young people so they feel a great sense of belonging at Okehampton College. We will also continue to challenge and support them every day to bolster their academic and personal development and ultimately help them to thrive both inside and outside of school.

Andrew Sweeney
Principal

Parent, Family and Community Briefing



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