

30 September 2022

OKEHAMPTON COLLEGE



Newsletter
Issue 1

Highlights

- Sponsored Walk
- Induction Day
- Humanutopia

At  We are

Kind

Tolerant

Respectful

Independent

Committed

Resilient

Hardworking

Responsible

Principal's Message; Andrew Sweeney



Welcome to the first Okehampton College newsletter of the 2022-23 academic year. We hope that this platform allows us to provide a good insight for our parents, carers and wider community members into what life is like on a daily basis for our students.

We are proud of every single young person within our college community, and the start they have made to the new term. Thank you to everyone in our community who has supported us in recent weeks through supportive messages and feedback in our collective mission to provide the best for our young people. As always, if you have any questions, please get in touch.

Andrew Sweeney
Principal

Vice Principal's Message; Phil Ruse



We have only been back for four weeks, but students have already experienced a range of different events and experiences. We have had the first student induction day for every student at the College. This gave students dedicated time to work with their new tutors, plan the year ahead and familiarise themselves with any systems and processes that have changed since the last academic year. We are grateful for all the positive comments we have received from families regarding our new behaviour policy, reset room and the increased rigour and elevated expectations we are communicating to our students. As ever, we welcome further feedback so please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss any aspect of college life in more detail.

Important Dates

- Friday 21st October - Last Day Of Term
- Monday 25th - Friday 28th October - Half Term
- Monday 31st October - All Students Return

...Team Building & Student Induction Day...

This student induction day was followed in week two, by each year group receiving a day of peer leadership work alongside our partners Humanutopia. I have enjoyed hearing how many students found these interactions to be thought provoking and helped them reflect on themselves as individuals and members of our school community. In the longer term, we have identified a group of Y9 students who have been trained to be 'heroes', a peer leadership role which will develop during the year and involve students supporting their younger peers in a genuine form of student activism.

The new term induction period culminated in the sponsored walk on Friday 23rd September. Over 1300 students completed the 8 mile walk across the beautiful Dartmoor countryside. This team-building event set a really positive tone for the year ahead, as well as raising a significant sum of money for both local and national charities.

Further detail and some great photographs of all of these events can be seen in the next few pages of this newsletter. In future editions we will share some snapshots of the curriculum content our young people are enjoying a cross the full range of subjects available to them. If you have any questions or queries about any aspect of your child's education at Okehampton College, please do not hesitate to contact myself or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.



Phil Ruse
Vice Principal



Team Building and Student Induction

On the first day of term, all students participated in a full student induction day. Whilst the content varied from year group to year group, there were several common threads to this work. Firstly, a strong focus on team building between students and new tutors getting to know their tutees for the year ahead. Secondly, this day was an opportunity to set the tone for the year and outline our collective plans to ensure every student at Okehampton College feels supported, challenged and able to succeed. With this, comes the need to remind all students of the pivotal role that they play in this vision. The 'Oke 8 Habits' frame this work and reinforce the behaviours and characteristics we will strive to encourage our students to show on a daily basis.

The induction day for key stage 4 students included a session on 'how we learn' and an opportunity for them to explore the new revision guides and resources that are forming a key part of their tutor programme. Years 8 and 9 enjoyed a teambuilding session with Adventure Okehampton on the school playing fields. Bridge building, axe throwing and various team building activities were completed amongst much excitement and competitive rivalry.

The student induction day was a new development this year. As with all our work, we will seek student, teacher, and parent voice feedback to learn how we can improve and enhance our provision in future years.

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...Sponsored Walk & Humanutopia...

The Okehampton College Sponsored Walk is a well-established, flagship part, of the academic year. An event that involves and brings together all students from Year 7 to Year 13, involving staff and students in what is both a challenging and fun event. Our Year 13 students having the responsibility of marshalling the route and ensuring all students are both encouraged and sent the right way, adding to the sense of solidarity.

We are fortunate to live in one of the most spectacular areas of the UK and fortunate enough to be able to access this directly from the college grounds. Students and staff set off as tutor groups, with our older tutor groups leaving last, in two opposite directions. Both routes include a demanding start to get straight up to Dartmoor via the Army Camp or Belstone – however as we all know, with great challenge comes great reward.

Students are rewarded with a loop around Belstone Tor, Winter Tor and Cullever steps, the beautiful day meant views were distant and the sun allowed tutor groups to sit for lunch and enjoy each-others company. In total eight miles of challenging walking was completed by over 1300 students and staff.

The walk has two aims:

- To encourage tutor groups to be involved in a common challenge and get to know each other
- To raise money for charities (along with Dartmoor National Park).

This year our chosen charities are:

Devon Air Ambulance, Cancer Support and Refugee Support Devon

We have been successful in our first aim, however work continues with our charity fundraising – I would ask and encourage you all to give generously to both support these great causes and show your acknowledgement of the challenge our students have completed.

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 a significant sum of money.



The Humanutopia team worked with a range of different year groups during the second week of term. This peer leadership programme is designed to support our wider cultural work across the College. The aims of the programme are as follows:

- To provide an opportunity for all students to reflect on their past and consider why and who they have become today.
- To provide a warm and psychologically safe environment for young people to express themselves about the struggles and challenges they have faced.
- To encourage the students to work collaboratively in small groups in order to present a positive social experience with students outside their friendship circles.
- To challenge young people to ask if and how they can make positive changes to improve their life chances.
- To inspire the students to aspire to a bigger and brighter future by encouraging them to consider and chase their dreams.

I am sure you will agree that these are ambitious but worthy aims that genuinely challenged many of our young people. Whilst thought provoking work such as this takes time to embed, it is part of our wider cultural development around behaviour and ethos across the College. We make no apology for striving to ensure that every young person feels accepted, challenged and able to succeed at Okehampton College.

The programme culminated in a group of Year 9 students working alongside a number of Year 6 students who visited us from Okehampton Primary School. Seeing these interactions between students up to four years apart in age was really inspiring and we certainly aim to build on these foundations in further strengthening our community links and providing an all through education for young people in our wider community. We will share more information during the year on how our Year 9 heroes have embraced their peer leadership role and the positive impact that they have had.



