



Dream big • Do your best • Give back

2nd October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

In this (long but hopefully informative!) letter:

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Year 6 Open Evening Thanks

On Thursday we held our Year 6 Open Evening. It was wonderful to welcome over 1,000 parents and children into school for our presentations and tours of the school. Hundreds of students willingly gave their time to showcase their school with immense enthusiasm and pride.

We have received so much feedback from visitors saying what brilliant ambassadors the students were for the school. Of course, we know this anyway, but it is heart-warming to hear of the lasting impression that it has left with our visitors. Our huge thanks to all those students involved for 'Giving Back' so brilliantly.

Covid and Vaccinations Update

After a slight increase in cases at the start of this week, case rates have again stabilised back at the low rate that I reported last week (approximately 0.5% of the school population).

With the arrival of October and the weather now on the turn, we know that seasonal colds and flus will start to emerge. Last week's letter pointed parents to advice on symptoms and the best course of action to take regarding school attendance, so please do refer to that.

Please remember that if your child is displaying any of the three 'main' symptoms they should self-isolate whilst they get (and wait for the result of) a PCR test. Please also keep your child(ren) testing twice a week at home - this is a really important measure to keep transmission rates low.

Should you be concerned about symptoms that do not appear on the official government symptoms list, it would be advisable for students to test daily over the few days where they are feeling less well and consider wearing a face covering, for additional reassurance. A

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reminder that, as well as the Lateral Flow Test kits issued by school, families can also order these direct from:

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

We have now had confirmation that the Covid vaccinations for 12- to 15-year-olds will take place in school during the week of 18th October (the week before half term). All relevant information, including digital consent forms, will be issued next week. Please refer back to my letter of 16th September for further information on vaccinations.

Uniform

As the weather has now returned to normal temperatures for the time of year, all students must now wear their blazers in school. Students may ask their class teacher if they can remove their blazer in class, but they must put their blazer back on before leaving the classroom.

Students playing football or other activities at lunch may remove their blazers, but again they must put their blazer on again when returning to lessons.

Queuing in 'Grab 'n' Go' Canteen

Following feedback from younger students and parents, as well as our own monitoring of the queues in the 'Grab 'n' Go' School Canteen, we have decided to separate the queuing process by yeargroup, with Year 7 and 8 students having exclusive access to one queue, and Years 9, 10 and 11 using the other. We will keep this under close review and will continue to seek to make improvements.

World Mental Health Day (WMHD) #HelloYellow - Friday 8th October

WMHD is being celebrated in schools nationwide on Friday 8th October and the charity Young Minds have launched a national campaign called #HelloYellow, which we support as a school.

We know that we need more than just one day to encourage young people to talk about their wellbeing and to seek help for their mental health. Starting on Monday, 'Off The Record' (<https://otrorthsomerset.org.uk>), a mental health and social movement for young people, will join us to run pop-up stations in key locations around the Gordano site. Weather-permitting, Off The Record will be stationed under their bright yellow gazebo in the school quad on Friday 8th October.

We aim to turn the school yellow on Friday 8th October by focusing awareness on mental health and raising money for the charity Young Minds (<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>). We invite students and staff to wear one item of yellow **with** their usual school uniform or to dress **completely** in yellow for the day (please note that this is not a non-uniform day). My own yellow item is currently being prepared and we hope to be cheered by a blast of yellow across the school.

If you are in a position to support the charity Young Minds, they invite a donation of £2 per student and we can collect this in cash on Friday 8th (in tutor time) or via the JustGiving site: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/gordano-school>

In the following week there will be ongoing tutor group activities and presentations across all year groups from Year 7 to Sixth Form, delivered in partnership with Off The Record.

Careers Convention, Thursday 7th October 5-7pm

All school years are welcome to attend our annual Careers Convention (held virtually last year). Our Careers team have organised stands from a diverse range of future employers - these will be spread across venues to minimise congestion.

There will also be talks in the Sixth Form lecture theatre - booking links as follows:

Introduction to Apprenticeship Talks (18:40, repeated at 19:40)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/182730350397>

Introduction to HE (University) Talks (18:10 repeated at 19:10)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/182739297157>

This is a golden opportunity for students to re-engage 'face to face' with future pathways and employers in thinking about their next steps (and to 'Dream Big'!).

Could you help?

1. Gordano Extra/Electives

We would welcome contact from any parents who would like to share their expertise with our students, either for an extra-curricular club (Gordano Extra for lower school, or an elective for Sixth Form (usually running on a Wednesday afternoon). We really value support from our community in being able to offer any wider opportunities and know how much our students benefit from sharing in your expertise.

If so, please email sjames@gordanoschool.org.uk if you feel you could work with our Sixth Formers, or smills@gordanoschool.org.uk if you have an activity club that we could offer to lower school students, of if you'd be willing to help support an existing club.

2. Gordano Careers Programme

We would also welcome contact from parents or ex-Gordano students who could offer a careers workshop/presentation as part of our teatime networking programme, and/or anyone who could offer a Year 10 Work Experience placement to one of our students next July (please email dcrosby@gordanoschool.org.uk) . The Year 10 'WEX' programme was launched in Year 10 assemblies this week and students will soon be applying for one of these invaluable work-related opportunities. Thank you in advance.

Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) Workshops

As parents/Carers, you may or may not wonder what exactly schools do in 'PSHE' lessons. At Gordano, we pride ourselves on delivering a top class PSHE curriculum covering many sensitive and important topics young people need to and should know about.

This year, for the first time, Gordano will be holding six workshops throughout the year where our Head of PSHE (Mr Greg Horner) will be inviting parents from specific year groups to join him for a workshop on some of the more sensitive and challenging topics we deliver in PSHE.

This term, we will be holding a workshop on how students are taught about 'Upskirting' and the sharing of 'nudes' (indecent images) during Year Eight. This session will take place on Wednesday 13th of October from 18:00 to 19:00 in the Main School Hall. If you are a parent of a year 8 child, please do come along - be prepared, you will be taking part in an element of a PSHE lesson!

And finally...

Our Open Evening illustrated the way in which our students are really 'bouncing back' from the worst of the pandemic with optimism, positivity and determination. It chimes with the picture recently painted by Dame Rachel de Souza, the new Children's Commissioner, in response to 'The Big Ask', a collection of the views of over a half a million young people on their lives, their place in society and their views about the future as we come out of the worst of the pandemic.

I have included an extract below, which I referred to on the Open Evening and that I think is worth sharing. I hope you find her words as uplifting as I do. As she states, they are a "heroic generation", and we see it as our role to support them in their desire to see the challenges they face, and to reckon with them.

With best wishes



Tom Inman
Headteacher

From Foreword to 'The Big Answer', Dame Rachel de Souza, DBE

"If adults are to learn one thing from this report, it should be as follows. This is not a 'snowflake generation.' It is a heroic generation.

A generation of children who are veterans of a global crisis. They have seen how colossally frightening life can be, far too young, and have made a lot of sacrifices. But they have endured, and are emerging stronger and prematurely wise.

They are a survivor generation - a sleeves-up, pragmatic generation, with civic-minded aspirations.

They believe in family. Not just the nuclear family - families of all kinds. Simply, they want happy homes.

They want to be healthy - mentally and physically. They want to escape the digital labyrinth in which they have been trapped... They want to be outside - to be in open spaces, and play.

They want activities, sport. The oldest children in this report have seen England bid for the Olympics, stage them, and this summer, some of those children have taken part themselves. There is joy and pride in so much achievement, but the zest here is not for competition, it is for participation.

They want community. Denied friendship during the pandemic, this generation of children have thought hard about bonds beyond family. They want to improve their local area and make it safer. They think hard about regional inequality, about injustice, about prejudice, about British values, about the environment - they want to engage with these things and address them. They are patriotic. They want to vote. Isolated for so long, they want - yearn even - to be part of something bigger than themselves.

They like school. They see education as important in and of itself, but also as a pathway to opportunity. They are historians, spurred on by new national debates about our past. They are divergent thinkers, who can slip between boundaries of traditional subjects. They are apprentices who want to be trained in vocations and crafts, and have parity of esteem with undergraduates.

This generation wants to get on and do well. To do tough, worthwhile jobs, and have fulfilling careers. Many want to be teachers and nurses and paramedics and doctors. They have seen their parents and carers struggle and they want to help them.

We can encourage that spirit. But we simply cannot let children carry that burden unaided, weighed down as they already are by a sense of inherited problems. Climate crisis. Covid debt. Disadvantage.

What is so inspiring is that they see these challenges, and they want to reckon with them - a heroic impulse."

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-answer/>