

19 December 2025

Dear Parents/Carers

In advance of the new term, we wanted to provide all families with some key updates. These are intended to support families and keep you all up to date with key information relevant for next term at St Dunstan's School. The Headteacher will be writing to you again at the end of the week to celebrate the term and share some further updates with you.

Attendance

Our aim for all students is to achieve attendance that is over 96%. We understand that illness can get in the way, but attendance is crucial for gaining the education needed for future career plans, including college. Currently, the majority of the school is meeting this target and we will be looking to work with all students over the coming months as we need to move towards all students meeting it in the new term.

In order to promote and recognise good attendance we have launched our rewards and recognition initiatives. These are shared in the weekly newsletter.

As part of our Trust Policy and procedures, we will also be making contact with families when attendance falls below key thresholds. This will be as follows-

Letter 1 - This is to make families aware that we have noticed the attendance slipping and want to support increased attendance. This happens following two or three absences.

Letter 2 - This will invite you to a meeting to discuss how we can support your child's attendance. The meeting will look at what steps we need collectively to take to support increased attendance.

We will write to you about broken weeks too. Broken weeks refers to times where a student does not complete a full week at school. This includes authorised and unauthorised absence. We would like to work with you to address these, so that they do not become a persistent pattern, impacting on your child's success and engagement in school.

Punctuality

Punctuality is a life skill all students will need for personal and professional responsibilities. Unfortunately there has been an increase in the past few weeks of students arriving late and we are keen that students return to the high standards of punctuality that were seen earlier in the term. In order to ensure that this is the case, please be advised of the following-

- The school gates close at 8:40am. Any students arriving after this time will be marked down as late and will receive a detention.
- Students should enter the school via the Lucas Block gates.
- Students are expected to arrive at their tutor rooms from 8:35am onwards for a prompt start at 8:45am.
- Students who arrive late at the start of the day or to lessons will receive a consequence in line with our behaviour expectations policy.
- Students who are late more than 3 times in a term, will receive an incremental set of consequences alongside contact home. Our hope is that students choose to cooperate and arrive on time, so that the school does not have to put these consequences in place.

We understand that there are occasions when a child may be late due to factors outside of their control. If this is the case, we ask that you contact reception to inform the school, so we can update our records. Please also feel free to approach our morning duty team to let them know of your circumstances as you drop your child off. As a general rule, daily heavy traffic is not an acceptable reason for being late.

Uniform & Equipment

Students at St Dunstan's are well presented, wearing their uniform proudly everyday.

Thank you again to parents who have supported us in making sure that our students are correctly dressed and well equipped for school. In the new term, we will be making some changes to our morning routines, to ensure that high standards for uniform and equipment continue to be maintained.

In advance of the Christmas break, we wanted to remind all families about some key uniform expectations -

- Students should wear dark socks either black or grey only. White socks are not allowed.
- St Dunstan's does not allow any facial piercings. Fresh piercings generally take a minimum of 4 weeks to heal. For this reason we advise against having new piercings over the Christmas period. Students will be expected to return to school with facial piercings removed and plasters or spacers are permitted,

- As the school year progresses it is inevitable that shoes will become tired or in need of repair. Please ensure that your child returns in the correct footwear and arrangements are made for repairs over the break. There are pictures on the school website should you need further clarification on acceptable footwear.
- Students are allowed to wear one small hoop or plain stud in the ears and one ring. Necklaces should not be visible. Often students receive items of jewellery for Christmas that can be valuable. We ask that students keep these at home to avoid any loss or damage.

If you require our assistance and support regarding items of uniform or equipment, please do not hesitate to make contact. We appreciate this time of year can be expensive for families and we will always support families where there are barriers or concerns.

Car parking & Collection

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation during the end-of-day collection. Your patience is essential in ensuring our students leave the site safely and efficiently. To maintain this high standard of safety, we ask that you adhere to the following parking and access guidelines.

Please ensure that you do not park on or obstruct the school "keep clear" markings, which have been freshly repainted to protect students using the crossing on this busy road. We also ask for your continued consideration toward our neighbours on Wells Road and Cox's Close by avoiding permit-only spaces and ensuring driveways remain clear.

Regarding site access, please be advised that the school car park will close to incoming vehicles at 3:10pm. This allows school transport to enter and depart safely without congestion. If you arrive after this time, we ask that you find a suitable alternative parking space nearby or wait patiently until the site reopens. Thank you for helping us keep our community safe and our local traffic flowing smoothly.

Assessment & Reporting

Students at St Dunstan's deserve sincere congratulations for their commitment and hard work throughout the Autumn Term.

We trust that their dedication is evident in the Term Report, which has been sent home this week. It was fantastic to see so many children meeting or working towards their challenging subject targets. These targets are intentionally aspirational, designed to be achievable with focused effort and perseverance.

Please join us in celebrating your child's success, especially those who achieved "Excellent" or "Good" in the Attitude to Learning/Behaviour columns.

For any subjects marked "Inconsistent" or "Unsatisfactory," we ask that you discuss this with your child. This reflection is a valuable learning opportunity to identify necessary changes and set a fresh, positive course for the new year.

Teaching & learning

Our students at St Dunstan's School have been able to demonstrate that they have been ready to learn effectively during the Autumn term, including bringing their equipment to school each day and following their timetable and Home Learning rota through the Arbor app and Google Classroom.

We will continue to set Home Learning through Arbor, so students will need to check work and progress through the app, with further details and links available on their Google Classroom.

Please also be aware that students can access their timetable through the Arbor calendar, along with details of the school day and approaching events.

If assistance is required with any of the above, please contact school reception in the first instance via email in order that we can triage the query.

Reading

The launch of our enhanced Read to Succeed this term has been received positively in the majority by staff and students, with regular reading taking place in tutor time. The purpose of this programme is to increase the reading fluency of students and to encourage reading literature for pleasure in a wider canon than some will have previously experienced.

Our further intention is to support students to read widely over time and to develop a diverse vocabulary they can interpret and use with confidence in everyday life as well as their studies as they explore literature as expert readers.

SEND Updates

Our new SENCO Mrs Pippa Whittaker enjoyed meeting so many of you last term and getting to know your children better.

We have recently appointed three new teaching assistants, who support our students who have EHCPs: Ms J Linden, Miss C Smith and Miss H Smith.

We are working on further developing our intervention programme and will be in touch in writing if we feel that your child would benefit from any of the interventions that we have on offer.

Our Learning Support hub always welcomes any donations of stationery items or art and craft materials that families are able to provide - these do not have to be new and are always very much appreciated!

Please could we kindly ask families to be aware that Mrs Whittaker has a teaching timetable and therefore is not generally available to answer un-booked phone calls or visits. If you would like to book a time for a phone call or meeting, please contact Mrs Whittaker via the school office and then this will be arranged.

Personal Development and Pastoral Updates

Acceptable use of Mobile Phones

Over the Christmas period, students will often join and participate in chat/discussion groups online. Whilst this is a useful way to keep in touch with peers, it also presents opportunities for unkind or inappropriate behaviours. Schools across the country often face challenges in the first few weeks of school after a holiday period, linked to messages, images and comments posted online. We advise parents to monitor their children's activity online and take appropriate action to block, report and remove their child from groups that they deem inappropriate.

Personal Development

This term, we have placed a strong emphasis on students' personal development, leadership, and wellbeing. Our Tutor Ambassadors and Student Council are now fully established, with students confidently taking on duty roles as Student Leaders. They have already made a positive contribution to school life by requesting additional litter pickers and actively promoting a clean, healthy environment. Building on this work, we will be launching an Eco Council next term as part of our Climate Action Plan, which will be introduced through whole-school assemblies.

Within PSHE, students have engaged positively with careers education. As a result, over half of our Year 11 students have now applied for their post-16 pathways, with staff continuing to offer targeted support to those who are still exploring their options. In Year 10, more than a third of students have already secured their work experience placements for later in the year. Assemblies this term have also supported students' wider development, covering Remembrance and Guy Fawkes, as well as a visit from the school nurse who spoke to students about a free, confidential chat service.

Looking ahead to next term, PSHE lessons will focus on safety awareness and healthy relationships, further supporting students' personal growth and wellbeing.

It is important for young people to receive the right help at the right time to address any risks or situations where they may feel unsafe. Issues can be de-escalated and children's welfare promoted in this way. Please contact the school's DSL if you have any concerns about a young person's welfare. Alternatively, if you wish to request any additional pastoral support for your child, please speak with the Head of Key Stage.

Important Dates

Please be advised of the following important dates for your diaries-

Monday 5 January- School closed

Tuesday 6 January- School reopens for all year groups

Thursday 22 January- Year 11 Parents' Evening

Thursday 5 February- Year 9 Parents' Evening & Options Fayre

Thursday 12 February- Year 10 Parents' Evening

Friday 13 February- End of Half Term

Thank you all for your continued support and we look forward to seeing the students return in the new year.

Wishing you and your families a happy Christmas and the very best for 2026.

Yours sincerely



P Balkwill



KHaden



T Armstrong-Vickers



A Richards



N Watson