

# Head's Summer Newsletter

September 2022

## ***WELCOME BACK TO A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR!***

Dear Parent / Carer

For once the sunshine continued into August and we have all enjoyed a very pleasant English summer for a change. Of course, the rising temperatures and lack of rain are not good indicators for climate change, but I do hope that you were able to make the most of it.

September is a bit like January in that we all get the chance to reset, look at our goals and start afresh. Before we look forward though, let's celebrate the achievements of our leavers.

In this newsletter:

- Congratulations to our Year 11s on their GCSEs
- News of our previous leavers
- Cost of Living Crisis
- "Porn is rewiring boys' brains to sanction rape culture"
- "No," to homework; "Yes," to Home Learning
- Sleep Hygiene – good advice for adults as well as students
- Green energy and roof repairs
- Directory of Email addresses and contact details

### **Congratulations to our Year 11s on their GCSEs**

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Our Year 11 students were the first to sit GCSEs since 2019 and worked hard to ensure that they achieved to the best of their ability. Although this year there were fewer top grades nationally we were really proud of all of our students – as we kept telling them throughout their time with us: they are much more than a number on a piece of paper.

Our highest achieving student got grades that were on average three grades above target and there were a number of others who achieved around two grades above target across all of their subjects. Another of our students has won a scholarship to study at Gordonstoun College where they began their studies a couple of weeks ago when Scottish schools returned. This is testament to their commitment to hard work, focus, attendance at support sessions and most importantly of all: their dedication to continued home learning to consolidate what they had learned in school.

- Students with grades 4 and above in English and Maths – higher than the national average.
- Students with grades 5 and above in English and Maths – higher than the national average.

We are delighted that all our students as far as we know at this point are successfully enrolled in a Post-16 course, will be starting an apprenticeship or have started employment.

## News of our previous Leavers

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I think those students finishing Year 13 had an exceptionally challenging time, having never had the chance to sit a formal external examination until this summer. I am delighted to let you know of a number of successes of some of our students who attended Runshaw College. If you know of more, or of any former students graduating or starting in new jobs, please do let us know as we love to hear how our former students are progressing.



## Cost of Living Crisis

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Last year we were wondering how continuing Covid infection would impact our students with staff absence. Already this year we have staff unwell with Covid (and I only recovered myself in time for the start of term!) so this continues.

However, this year the cost of living is going to affect us all. Where families have no disposable income, it is difficult to know how to make any further savings and for many more families there will be difficult decisions to make. We are acutely aware of how many of you will face challenges as we move through the next months. We don't have all the answers, but we can certainly try our best to help and advise.

Do not hesitate to get in touch with the school to let us know if you are struggling with uniform, stationery or putting food on the table as we will try to find ways to help out if we can.

## "Porn is rewiring boys' brains to sanction rape culture" – founder of Everyone's Invited

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In my last newsletter at the end of the summer term, I provided you with links to some useful websites about how to support and talk to your child about Child-on-Child abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) as well as some powerful statistics about the level of abuse that takes place within the context of schools.

Sara Soma, founder of the *Everyone's Invited* website points out, there is only so much a half hour PSHE lesson in schools can do. We do much more than this; we work really hard through our curriculum, through PSHE, through posters around school and small group discussions led by senior leaders to educate, inform and provide our young people with tools to protect them and do all that we can to encourage positive, healthy relationships both of a sexual or a non-sexual nature.



However, Sara Soma addresses concerns about the influence that watching extreme pornography is having upon young men in our society to the point that they sanction rape culture. This is not all boys, and those that do are victims of a culture within our society which they are ill-equipped to understand or deal with:

*Boys, she says, are increasingly being manipulated by toxic alpha-male influencers, promoting a masculinity "that is about domination and suppression and hurting and belittling women and competing and winning". She is referring to men such as Andrew Tate, recently banned from Facebook and TikTok for his glorification of rape culture and abuse of women. "The older generation have no idea how toxic he is."*

*Parents and teachers, she warns, should be worried. "We are in a moment when we need to be really reaching out and helping boys because they are vulnerable to radicalisation, essentially. This is hateful, anti-feminist ideology and boys deserve better, they should be able to talk openly about their mental health, to be emotional and share their vulnerability."*

*"The masculinity now being promoted is all very aggressive and febrile and about making money and taming women. You have to be this rock of a man who is dominating and objectifying and oppressing women rather than befriending them." The gap between the generations, she feels, is wider than for years. "Young people genuinely are online all day. They'll spend eight hours scrolling, it's such a different way to live from their parents. Their on- and offline personas have become entangled."*

*But it is porn that worries her most. "It's the biggest mountain we have to tackle. Porn is the wallpaper that framed our lives." One young author recently wrote about how when she was 12 she saw a woman being involved in a sex act with a frozen fish online. Sara says, "It's far more extreme now, it's about suppression and objectification and much of the time lacks consent. All young people have seen online porn. It's transforming and rewiring boys' brains to normalise sexual violence and sanction rape culture. How can a 30-minute PHSE class challenge that?" Her friends, now in their twenties, are questioning why they were allowed access to such extreme content. "It's harmed many relationships and the distribution of power. A 14-year-old boy shouldn't think it's normal for a girl to cry when she's having sex."*

*Why can't girls just say "no" when their male peers try to coerce them into abusive behaviour? "Boys would say you're being a prude or selfish or frigid if you don't do this. Girls don't want to get a reputation for being boring or vanilla and adults weren't telling us what was normal and acceptable. It would have been transformative for my age group if the older generation of women had said, 'You deserve to prioritise your sexual pleasure too, you should be able to explore your sexuality in a safe way'."*

*Instead, she says, talk about sex has remained taboo. "When you are very young and someone asks you to have anal sex it's too awkward to ask an adult if that's right, you probably haven't even spoken to your parents or teachers about kissing. My generation felt so isolated with no one to talk to about these issues. It was peer-on-peer normalisation setting the standards and no adult said — that's not OK, that's not what we are doing in real life."*

(Extract from article in The Times: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/7352edd4-2adb-11ed-a830-74a6c8fbb722?shareToken=ca93517404ebb4a51d98db88310c980b>)

These are difficult subjects, but as parents and teachers we are foolish if we think that this is something that doesn't concern our children or that it is something that 'happens to other people'. Do you really know what is on your son/daughter's phone? Are they being effectively protected from negative peer pressure? They are children, but are they being exposed to attitudes, images and unreal 'norms' that they do not have the emotional maturity to handle or understand?

We do deal with these issues in school and you can read more in the links that you were sent last term about our sex and relationships education programme. Each of our students has some excellent and practical advice in the Student Planner which all students have been issued with this term. The Handbook also emphasises why we have a “No touching” rule in school. Please do take a moment to look through these.

### “No,” to Homework; “Yes,” to Home Learning

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All of our tutor groups have been spending time this week with their tutors looking at the importance of Home Learning and strategies for them to be able to do effective home learning.

#### “What is Home Learning and why is it different to Homework?”

Homework is a rather narrow and outdated notion of the work that young people do at home. It suggests that it is a specific piece of work set by a teacher that all students complete and that it is set at a specific time. This is not the best use of our students’ time spent learning at home. Firstly, it is not necessarily the case that one piece of work is suitable for all students to do and too often it doesn’t deepen learning, but continues what was already being done in the lesson.

Research into memory and learning retention has shown very clearly the links between revisiting learning repeatedly (retrieval) and over longer stretches of time (spacing). Therefore, we have been training all of our students how to make effective mindmaps, flashcards, where to access revision videos, how to use online learning tools that we have subscribed them to in order to revisit and consolidate their learning.

In other words: ***there is never a time that our students do not have home learning to do!***

This is not the same thing as revision which is something that you would only do for a test or exam. It is an ongoing process to fix learning in the long-term memory.

Memory is like a path across a field. If you walk across it a couple of times, you may be able to discern a faint path, but it will soon disappear. However, if that path is revisited many times over a long period, it soon becomes permanent.



Learning is also like this. Teachers have very full curricula to deliver. They will cover a number of topics in a lesson, then in the next lesson they will move onto more new topics. Home Learning places an emphasis on students taking control of their learning and revisiting the knowledge, information and skills their teachers have taught them until they become fixed. Teachers will support revisiting with *retrieval tasks* in their lesson plans and of course through *tests* and *exams*, but it is down to students to fix their knowledge through home learning. If when going over their learning there are topics that they don’t understand, they can ask their teachers for further support.

When done properly, revision does not consist of going over the topics that students did a longer time ago, but of the newest learning because that is the least fixed knowledge in their long-term memories!

Therefore, if your child ever says that they do not have any work to do at home, they are misleading you – they do! We will be running a session on supporting your child’s learning for parents of Year 10 students on **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September at 5.00pm in Hall**. We will remind you again nearer to the time.

## Sleep Hygiene – good advice for adults as well as students!

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We hear all the time about the mental health and wellbeing of society and especially our young people, but nowhere near enough attention is given in these discussions of the importance of good sleep hygiene. It is possibly the single most important environmental factor that we are able to control and the mental and physical benefits of good sleep hygiene are huge! As adults, for example, less sleep makes you more vulnerable to becoming diabetic as less sleep increases insulin resistance, makes you hungrier and reduces the sense of feeling full when you have eaten. Ditch your diet and get some better sleep!



We are often shocked to find out how poor the sleep habits are of some of our students (especially after a half term or holiday break). Teens do tend to release more melatonin in the evening meaning that they can start to feel more awake when the evening arrives, but there are many things that we can do to help reduce this impact.

The website <https://teensleephub.org.uk/> has some excellent resources on it for both teenagers and parents. Managing your child's screentime and the devices that they have in their rooms is one of a number of solutions to improving not just your child's mental wellbeing, but also their physical health.

Other useful sites to look at are:

- The Sleep Council: <https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/>
- Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>



## Green Energy and Roof Repairs

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Anyone visiting the school cannot fail to have seen a rather large amount of scaffolding on the West Wing whose play area has been closed off to students for more than two years now. This is because the nails that held the tiles on had nail rot. This roof is now being replaced by Lancashire County Council and should be finished this term.

At the same time we are looking to insulate the roof more effectively to do all that we can to save on energy costs. We are also hoping to install a number of solar panels on the roof of the school this year so that we can generate more of our own green energy.

## Contacting School

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Good communication between home and school is really important. There are a number of ways in which you can make contact with school.

- If your child is absent:
  - Phone: 01772 421 009 (Option 1) and leave a message
  - Email: [attendance@balshaws.org.uk](mailto:attendance@balshaws.org.uk)
  - Website: <http://www.balshaws.org.uk/absence-reporting> (the link is at the bottom of the Home page)

If any of the data we hold about your child has changed, it is really important to keep your data up-to-date. Please phone the office or use the *Contact Us* form on the school website with the new details.

As well as using the website or phoning the school directly, you can also contact your child's teachers directly through their emails. Your first port of call would usually be your child's form tutor as they will know your child as well as any teacher in school and will often be able to resolve issues very quickly or know where to direct them to.

A full list of teachers' email addresses is below.

## Email Directory:

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Please note that working hours are 8.30 – 5.00 and teachers will be following their teaching timetable during the day. Teachers will aim to contact you by the end of the next working day whenever possible.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Preferred Surname</b>	<b>Work Email</b>
Miss	APPLETON	r.appleton@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	BACHE	l.bache@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	BARRETT	m.barrett@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	BLACKBURN	d.blackburn@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	BLENKINSHIP	h.blenkinship@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	BROWN - Technology	c.brown@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	BROWN - Geography	e.brown@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	CARR	m.carr@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	CHERRY	k.cherry@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	COBURN	s.coburn@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	CORNER	h.corner@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	CORNWELL	c.cornwell@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	DANIELS	m.daniels@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	DAVIDSON	m.davidson@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	DOLMAN	d.dolman@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	DUCKWORTH	l.duckworth@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	DUDLEY	l.dudley@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	DUNN	n.dunn@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	GORE	c.gore@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	GREAVES	p.greaves@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	GREGORY	r.gregory@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	HARWOOD	k.harwood@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	HAYCOCKS	s.haycocks@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	HENDERSON	g.henderson@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	HIMSWORTH	a.himsworth@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	HOLDEN	d.holden@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	HOLLAND	a.holland@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	HORNE	i.horne@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	HOWARTH	d.howarth@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	HUNKIN	a.hunkin@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	JACKSON	b.jackson@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	JENNINGS	g.jennings@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	KENDALL	o.kendall@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	KIRBY	a.kirby@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	LATIMER	e.latimer@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	LLEWELLYN BALL	r.llewellynball@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	LOCKHART	d.lockhart@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	LUPTON	d.lupton@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	LYLYK	j.lylyk@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	MACKINTOSH	c.mackintosh@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	MARSH	l.marsh@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	McCUTCHEON - English	f.mccutcheon@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	MCCUTCHEON – CL Science	j.mccutcheon@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	MCHALE	s.mchale@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	MORGAN	j.morgan@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	MORT	s.mort@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	NIGHTINGALE	s.nightingale@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	RILEY	s.riley@balshaws.org.uk

<b>Title</b>	<b>Preferred Surname</b>	<b>Work Email</b>
Mrs	ROGERSON	m.rogerson@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	SHANNON	j.shannon@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	SINGLETON DE CARRANZA	j.singletondecarranza@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	SMITH	h.smith@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	SPEAKMAN	c.speakman@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	THOMAS	v.thomas@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	THOMASSON	s.thomasson@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	TOWNSEND	k.townsend@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	TURNER – Science	j.turner@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	TURNER - Technology	b.turner@balshaws.org.uk
Mr	UNSWORTH	s.unsworth@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	WARBURTON	c.warburton@balshaws.org.uk
Miss	WARD	l.ward@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	WILSON – Deputy head	a.wilson@balshaws.org.uk
Mrs	WILSON - Science	r.wilson@balshaws.org.uk