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Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

As you'll be aware, the usual format of these letters is that I tend to write more about ethos and values and then we share some precise pieces of information. However, this week I'd like to focus on three very specific things. There is therefore a lot of detail in this week's update, and I apologise in advance for its length, but I wanted to address some key issues.

### **New Build**

Last week the Department for Education confirmed who the contractor will be for the building of the new school on this site. This is a crucial step, meaning in effect that the new build project has finally been confirmed. Constructors will be on site as early as this weekend, although at this stage not in a way that will disrupt any students, and we'll be attending a series of key meetings to help shape the design, ethos and feel of the new building. As some of you will be aware, 2025 was meant to be the end of the building work and to that end the school was advised by the DofE not to implement some maintenance work in our current buildings as there would be no need. This means that what were already tired buildings have become even more so.

There will be a formal public consultation process on the building work, and we'll share details on this as soon as we can. However, I am happy to give up time to talk now to anyone in the local area who'd like to know more about the project, especially if in doing so I can provide assurances about the impact or fold these views into my meetings with the construction firm. Last week I met people who manage the homes for Durham Aged Mineworkers that are next to the school, and we had a really positive conversation about the potential build work where in reality I was able to reassure them about their worries. If any local homeowners or community groups would like an informal conversation about the rebuild before the public consultation starts, please do get in touch and I'll share what I can.

### **Closure of access to the school site from the pedestrian gate on Old Pit Lane, parking and access to the school from Newton Drive**

Without wanting to belittle the importance of this issue, I can say that in all the training and preparation work you can undertake before becoming a Headteacher, no one talks to you specifically about the huge issues associated with students simply travelling to the school safely.

As you'll be aware, we closed the pedestrian gate on Old Pit Lane to partially make the school site more secure by limiting the entrance points, partly as when the building work does begin this will have to happen and I'd rather adjust to this now rather than later. Overall, this has been positive with the students responding well and we'll be keeping the gate closed. However, the increase in footfall along Old Pit Lane is inevitably causing

more traffic delays as students choose to use the crossing nearer Newton Drive. One parent wrote to me recently, supporting the closure of the gate but suggesting that students cross the road earlier. This does though mean that if students do this, they need to be careful when crossing the driveway at the top of the school.

A local councillor has also spoken with me to point out that there is free all-day parking behind the shops on Priory Road and that people might like to use this, at their own risk, as a pickup or drop off point; alternatively 6<sup>th</sup> Formers, who can't park on site, could use this for their limited number of vehicles.

Finally, I've had a message asking me to remind parents and carers that the car park on the corner of Bek Road and Carr House Drive, St Bede's car park, is a private car park and shouldn't be used for pick up and drop off.

I'm sharing these messages partially as I said I would, but also to illustrate that this issue is complex with a variety of viewpoints and interested parties. I also understand that for individual families' issues around transporting your children safely are complex. I would once again ask everyone to be considerate of others during their journeys and to please remind your children of the importance of staying safe on their way to school, especially when crossing roads. The pedestrian access point on Newton Drive and the surrounding roads are woefully inadequate considering the amount of people who need to make use of them. At least the prospect of the new build means some of these issues will be finally alleviated.

## **Toilets**

Openly writing about toilets to parents and carers can lead to some very emotive responses. The student toilets in schools across the country have a reputation for being the places in schools most likely to be the setting for poor behaviour, in reality because they afford students a measure of privacy. There are also complex issues around how students perceive the toilets: Year 7 students can suddenly find themselves in a space with Year 11 students and while everyone might be being perfectly pleasant it can feel like a very different experience compared to primary school as they are now in, as they see it, an "adult" environment.

I do toilet duty every lunch time here in school at our largest set of boys' toilets. I check each lock is working, flush each toilet if any boys have "forgotten" and clear any litter from the floor. I spend a surprisingly large amount of time reminding the boys to both flush the toilet when they've finished and to then wash their hands, basics that I would hope the majority of them would have mastered by this stage. All students have been told that the toilets are used by a huge number of students each day and require regular cleaning. They are for all students so behaviour needs to be considerate of others and locks should not be damaged. They have also been told to treat the toilet areas with respect and behave in a calm and orderly way, keeping them safe for all.

We ask that they do these simple things to maintain basic hygiene levels, such as flush the toilet, wash their hands and not put toilet paper (or indeed anything else) on the floor. Please support the school by reinforcing these messages.

Thanks for taking the time to read about these practical areas of school life. I know from feedback from the people who do read these letters that some of you prefer this sort of granular detail about the school while others much prefer those updates that focus on ethos and ideas – next week I'll be writing to you all much more in that vein.

Many thanks for your continued support of the school; I hope you all have a good weekend.



Michael Wright

Please find this week's key messages below.

### **End of Term**

Term finishes for Christmas and New Year here on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December. As usual our finish time that day is different to the norm and also slightly varies by year group. Please see the detail below:

6<sup>th</sup> Form – School finishes at 12.00pm but students are welcome to stay on site for lunch.

Year 11 – School finishes at 12.15pm after their earlier lunch; students are welcome to stay on site until 1.00pm if catching buses.

Years 7-10 – School finishes at 1.00pm when buses will be departing.

### **Lockdown Drill – Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December Period 2**

The school will be holding a lockdown drill on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December. This is to simulate what would happen in the event of an intruder onsite. Students will know about this in advance, unlike with a fire drill, and should treat the exercise as exactly that, an exercise, and not something to be worried about. On a personal level I will say that it's very sad that schools are required to hold such drills, if appropriate.

### **Christmas Jumper Day – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December**

We will be supporting Save The Children's Christmas Jumper Day at Fram again this year. This will take place on the last day of term Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December, and students are encouraged to join in the festive fun by wearing a Christmas jumper or T-Shirt with their school skirt or trousers and school shoes. They are not required to wear a school skirt, tie or blazer if they are participating. For those who don't want to join in, it is a normal school uniform day, although they could wear a Santa hat or other accessories with their uniform (normal school jewellery rules still apply).

If you have a Christmas jumper or T-Shirt that your child has outgrown you can donate it to the school for us to give to another child. Please contact Mrs Wright to do this ([wright.s@framdurham.com](mailto:wright.s@framdurham.com)).

You will be able to make a donation to Save The Children via Parent Pay closer to the time.

**Mrs Wright, Head of Year 11**

## **Year 10 and 11 Christmas Celebration event**

If your child is invited to join the Celebration event, they need to come to school wearing their school PE kit as they will be participating in a giant inflatable obstacle course alongside other festive activities. They can wear their Christmas jumper/T Shirt too. Communication was sent out last week with the criteria required to join the event, and Year Teams will send out details about participation at the start of the final week. If you have any queries about this event, for Year 11 contact Mrs Wright (wright.s@framdurham.com) and for Year 10 contact Miss Barton (barton.k@framdurham.com).

**Mrs Wright, Head of Year 11**

## **Use of Class Charts**

We would like to remind you of the importance of regularly checking our Class Charts to stay updated on your child's progress, achievements, attendance, and any important announcements.

Class Charts provides valuable insights into your child's education.

By staying engaged with this platform, you can:

- Monitor your child's daily and weekly progress.
- Stay informed about upcoming independent learning and deadlines.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for their learning.

We encourage you to log in at least once a day to keep track of your child's achievements and areas for improvement. If you have any questions about accessing Class Charts or need assistance, please feel free to contact the school office.

**Mrs Mersh-Roberts, Deputy Headteacher**

## **Year 11 Progress Meetings**

Year 11 parents and carers will receive information next week about the next round of Progress Meetings. The meeting is a further opportunity for you and your child to meet with a senior member of staff to discuss current progress in Year 11, and they start the week beginning **20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

Please note - due to the volume of appointments being conducted, we are unable to change appointments or reschedule. Your child will attend their appointment on their own should you be unable to attend.

**Miss Lutynski, Assistant Headteacher**

## **6<sup>th</sup> Form News**

There was a special assembly this week for the students in Years 12 and 13 who have received outstanding reports. I met with students, congratulated them on their hard work and encouraged them to call into my office to claim their celebratory pack of biscuits. I'll also be writing home in a slightly more formal fashion to recognise all their efforts. Below there are some more specific messages from Mrs King.

### **– Sixth Form applications**

A reminder that the deadline for initial applications from Year 11 students is Monday 9th December; the link to the application form has been sent to students and parents and carers on Class Charts.

### **– Celebrating Students**

Congratulations to Bradley Smith in Year 13; he has now won the national boxing championship four times following his latest hard-fought win.

Congratulations to Katie Palmer (and her brother Ben in Year 10), who has qualified to swim at the Scottish Nationals this weekend, building on their achievements earlier on in the year when they swam at English Nationals. Katie will be swimming in the medley relay team, the freestyle relay team, 50 & 100 freestyle, 50, 100, 200 back and 100IM and Ben will be swimming 400IM and 200fly. The event is an open category rather than age group so for them to have qualified for the races they have is a fantastic achievement

**Mrs King, Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form**

## **Online Safety**

As a school we make every effort to safeguard our students, and we challenge any abuse of social media platforms that may directly or indirectly be distressing for some of our students. However, we are spending an increasing amount of time challenging inappropriate use of social media platforms that we deem reasonable or necessary. We have recently been made aware that some communications have been malicious, abusive and discriminatory and may require police involvement.

We strongly recommend that students do not join or contribute negatively to any WhatsApp groups or add any apps to their mobile phones that they are not legally permitted to do so, due to the risks that may be associated with this. We would like to stress the importance of parent/carer judgement as to whether certain groups or apps may be suitable for your child to join, add or download. Can we please advise all parents and carers to be mindful of legal age requirements for social media apps, as we are aware a lot of our students are being exposed to harmful content online due to accessing sites where they do not meet the legal age requirements.

Just as a reminder, we would like to highlight the legal age restrictions for social media platforms:

13 years old and upwards:	16 years +	Not suitable for under 18s
Tik Tok	Flickr	Monkey
Instagram	Linkedin	OmeGLE
Facebook	Vimeo	Meet me
Snapchat	Myspace	Yolo
Twitter	Periscope	Tagged
You Tube		
Houseparty		
Kik		
Bebo		
Younow		
Whisper		
Reddit		
Tumblr		
Yubo		
Discord		
Twitter		
OmeGLE		
Ask FM		
Whatsapp		

To support you further we would like to signpost you to the following websites that you may find useful.

[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Our Online Safety Hub also offers lots of useful tips and advice on keeping safe online:  
[Online Safety Hub - Framwellgate School Durham](#)

If you wish to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact school and discuss with the relevant year teams.

**Mrs Osborne, Director of Safeguarding**

## **VEX Robotics**

Thank you so much to all the parents and students who battled through the snow to get to the VEX tournament in Tanfield on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November. It showed huge commitment to the team, enthusiasm for the competition, resilience and determination, and Mr Earnshaw and Mrs Spoor were very proud of them all!

On the day, the Fram Hyper Bots team were up against Gordonstoun School, who travelled from Elgin in Scotland, a multiple tournament-winning competitor from Solihull and more experienced teams from Tanfield and Whickham. Despite this and having to contend with travel delays and a number of reliability problems, they came close to beating one of the eventual winners in an exciting qualifying match, narrowly losing by 9 points to 7!

A number of teams, including Gordonstoun's sixth form team who were the eventual winners, were extremely interested in Fram's innovative design for loading "donuts" onto the mobile goal, which was a real testament to the team's creativity and engineering skills. The Hyper Bots have already started work redesigning their robot for the next tournament in February, and we are looking for sponsorship if anyone is able to help?

**Mr Earnshaw**

## **Department Spotlight – Technology**

This week we have been visiting students in their food & nutrition and design technology lessons. Our Key Stage 3 students have been completing assessments in food technology this week. We have been finding out about how they have been preparing for these so they can go into their assessments with confidence.

When we visited Years 10 and 11 food & nutrition lessons, we were very impressed with the skills on show during practical lessons. Year 11 students had voluntarily worked during their lunchtime on their coursework pieces, and we witnessed them working independently to produce some delicious looking dishes. Unfortunately, we were not around for the tasting, but we saw everything from a mushroom risotto being prepared for a calorie-controlled diet to a gluten free Oreo cake! The students spoke with such confidence about their recipes and their experiences in food & nutrition. Year 10 students were working towards making chicken tikka, but their first challenge was preparing and de-boning the chicken. A few students were a little reluctant at first, but they soon tackled this with a real confidence!

In design technology we saw students working diligently to ensure that their design ideas were fully annotated and evaluated and we spoke with students about their preparations for exams and assessments. Unsurprisingly, what students tell us they love most about design technology is the opportunity to create and make things and we saw some wonderful examples of this with Year 12 who are bringing their clock designs to life. Students use design software to support what they are doing and so many of the students we spoke to could really see how they would put these skills to use in the future and many had aspirations to go into design and technology related fields and industries.

**Mrs Machin, Deputy Headteacher**