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Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

At the various meetings with parents and carers last half term we asked people to complete a short questionnaire about the school, leaving comments. In this week's update I'd like to respond to some of the issues raised. I've selected those that appeared the most frequently.

Communication

This area was identified for praise by parents, second only to pastoral care in terms of the frequency with which people identified it as a strength. However, it was also the most common area for development that people cited. Comments tended to focus on people wanting responses more quickly. We'll always strive to respond in a timely manner although as I wrote last week, during the school day our focus must be on the students here in the building at that moment. Some people completing the survey specifically wanted parents' evening events to move back to a face-to-face approach. While I appreciate that the 5-minute slots can seem limited, using the online platform has several advantages. Firstly, more parents and carers do attend these events online which would suggest in the main this is an improvement on face-to-face appointments. This is particularly true for under-resourced parents. Secondly, the way these evenings are organised online hopefully reduces the amount of wasted time of the old system when people would sit in queues for a large part of their evening. Thirdly, from the perspective of teachers, the system is also in the main liked for the certainty it brings to the evening and as an employer we also have a duty of care to them.

The School Site

Many people wrote about the buildings and indeed the wider school grounds. One of these people commented that they knew work was underway but in general people expressed frustration and this is a frustration I share. At the time of writing the contract for the rebuild is due to be awarded the week beginning 18th November i.e. next week. When this is done there will be of course public consultation around the plan which I would encourage all parents and carers to engage with, but construction work should start in 2025. I do say that a school is the people in it, not the buildings, and this is true, but let us be candid, having a modern building helps in many ways. I'm acutely aware that Framwellgate will be the last of the central Durham city state secondary schools to be rebuilt and feel it's fair that it's our turn.

Homework

This was another key area parents and carers highlighted. Comments ranged from there being too much, too little and in some cases not enough support. In general, I do think that homework, or independent learning, is crucial both from the perspective of the learning but almost as importantly in terms of the habits it builds and forms. However, I also recognise that by its very nature this is a part of school life that parents see 'live' and as well as therefore generating a lot of conflicting views it's an area we need to

explore in partnership more. To that end in the next calendar year, we'll be inviting interested parents and carers to come and talk to us in a focus group about this specific issue along with some others. I'm aware that this seems like I'd delaying action but, as highlighted above, we will be having to go through a formal public consultation around the new build and I think trying to ask people to think about that and then some other aspects of school life at the same time is unlikely to lead to the engagement we'd like to make it a worthwhile exercise. We'll share more details about the potential focus groups later in the academic year.

Lastly, and on a very different note, I have this week been meeting with local primary headteachers and visiting schools to look at how we can work as a collective to ensure the most support for our shared community. In one primary school a Year 6 student proudly told me, "You taught my mum." They then proceeded to update me on what their mum had done in the past 20 years since that time as well as their weekend plans. This for me at least was a highlight of my week.

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.

Key Year 11 Information – Mock Exams Week Beginning 18th November

We hope your child had a restful break over half term but also dedicated some time to their mock preparation, as was discussed with both parents/carers and students in last half term's progress meetings.

We'd like to congratulate Year 11 students on their hard work and dedication to RAS.

To aid in mock preparation, your child has received a revision booklet with timetable templates to help them organise their time, a mock timetable, checklists for each subject so they know what they should be revising and the revision techniques, so students should know how to revise. An electronic version was also sent to yourselves via Class Charts before half term.

We understand that the mock exam process can be a stressful one and students received an 'exam stress' assembly from an external agency this week in their personal development lesson, to offer them some help and support with this.

During the mock period ALL Year 11 students will be able to access a free breakfast in the form of toast in Einstein's from 8.00am to ensure they have the opportunity to eat before a busy day of mock exams.

Miss L. Lutynski, Assistant Headteacher

Sixth Form Update

It was wonderful to see many of our Year 11 students and their families attend our open evening this week; we hope that it was a positive and informative experience for you. We are also very grateful to our amazing Year 12 and 13 students who volunteered to support us throughout the evening and shared eloquently about their experiences of sixth form at Fram.

Year 11 students have received the link to the initial Sixth Form application today via Class Charts.

It was wonderful to see our sixth formers rise to the challenges of their first assessment week of the year last week; their teachers commented on their mature and positive approach, and it has been great to hear about some of our students' successes. Each sixth-form student will now have an individual 'review and reflect' meeting with their subject teachers, where they discuss their progress and their next steps.

We have enjoyed our celebration assemblies this week. All of our half-termly 'subject stars' have been recognised in both Year 12 and Year 13; Year 12 winners were excited to receive their first 'star' badges and are wearing them on their lanyards with pride (and hoping to build the impressive collections that many of our Year 13 students have).

On Friday we will be fundraising for Children in Need. Sixth formers are looking forward to wearing their pyjamas, hoodies and onesies!

Mrs King, Head of 6th Form

Durham City Vision Consultation

The Durham City Vision team held a drop-in session with our students this week, inviting them to share their thoughts and ideas on Durham City. They have asked us to share the information below with parents and carers:

Durham County Council are engaging with communities and stakeholders across the city to help shape a new vision for Durham's future. As parents and carers you can also take part by completing the survey below. Everyone who participates and completes the survey can enter the draw to win a £100 One4All voucher, which can be spent in over a hundred different businesses. Please complete the survey before 5pm on 25th November.

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/31961/Help-shape-Durham-City-s-future>

Geography Visitor

On Wednesday of this week some Year 9 geographers welcomed Tori Thompson from OASES to the department to talk about Durham's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The strategy aims to work with local schools and organisations in consultation to support the abundance of nature in the region. The Year 9 students were a credit to the school as they asked intelligent questions and provided useful ideas as to how the site of our new school could be designed to encourage as much wildlife as possible. Mr Knights will be further developing the work of OASES in January when he launches our exciting new Geography Club which will focus on both geography in the news and environmental issues. Posters showing information about this club will appear in the department soon!

Mrs Laidlaw, Curriculum Lead for Geography

Year 10 Humanutopia

Year 10 students took part in Humanutopia workshops this week at the Sjøvoll Centre.

Humanutopia is a Merseyside based company which delivers motivational, life changing workshops for young people, with the aim of improving the mental health and wellbeing of students by empowering them to make changes in their lives and think about their life choices. Topics covered include resilience, peer conflict, bullying and self-esteem building exercises.

Our Year 10 students were an absolute credit to our school. All students did themselves proud in the way they conducted themselves and interacted with each other as a year group. They showed an incredible amount of respect for the lead facilitator from Humanutopia, but most importantly, for each other.

We had laughter, tears, and a genuine empathy for the experiences students shared. Staff in school were overwhelmed by how incredible the students were from start to finish, so please discuss this with your child and let them know how proud we are of them. What was clear, is that there was a real sense of community from the year group which was extremely uplifting for everyone involved - especially the staff!

If you would like to know more about the workshops, please feel free to visit their website www.humanutopia.com