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Dear Parents/Carers

Apologies for this long update; we have several things to share with you and hope that one letter was better than clogging email accounts with multiple smaller communications. As always, we save all the exciting celebratory information for the newsletter, this update is to share items of interest to parents where we need your support and to update you on the running of the school.

Drugs awareness

I am always nervous about sharing information in the community that may cause concern. However, it is important that you are aware of all information, no matter how difficult, so that you have a choice to respond appropriately within your family. Since September we have picked up on an increase in drugs use in the community that has extended to school age children. Perhaps it will not surprise you to know that Cannabis remains an issue, but we are becoming increasingly concerned about Ketamine and are now aware of incidents including Cocaine.

Crowthorne is a lovely village and may be considered affluent. It is wrong to assume that because this is a nice area, we are somewhat protected from criminality around drugs. It is quite the opposite; such villages can become targeted because of relative affluence.

Whilst in context, this is an issue that will affect a very small minority, we are encouraging families to have open conversations to ensure that students are aware that such issues exist and to arm them with the skills needed to stay safe. We carry out drugs education via our PSHE programmes and through assemblies, with targeted support where needed. Along with support and education, we must also send the clearest possible message that illegal substances cause physiological and psychological harm and expose users to a range of criminality and danger that can have life changing consequences, not least the potential loss of your place at school.

If you would like some support around this topic the [NSPCC](#) has several resources as does [Young Minds](#) and [Talk to Frank](#).

Use of the medical room

We are fortunate to have a Lead First Aider on site who is here to deal with emergencies that help to keep our community safe. This is very different from having a qualified School Nurse. At present we are experiencing a significant increase in students visiting the first aid room, particularly at the start of day. Students will occasionally tell us that parents have sent them in to 'see the nurse' to have something checked or first aid administered that could have taken place at home. We will remind students via assemblies that the medical room is for emergencies, those needing immediate support or becoming unwell during the day that may necessitate being sent home.

Of course, we have a duty of care to ensure that we look after everyone but inappropriate use is becoming unmanageable. Your support with this message is appreciated. Please refer to the '[Medical Hub](#)' on this link for further information.

Bike Sheds and Locks

Last week we disturbed an attempted theft from the sheds. A trespasser in a balaclava, with bolt cutters appears to have climbed the fence and attempted to break into the bike shed. Several students using the bike sheds are not using bike locks, please can I ask that bikes are appropriately protected. The police have been informed and have been given the CCTV recording.

Changes to the leadership structure

Many of you will remember Bob Elsey, our former Headteacher, who has been the CEO of our Trust (Corvus Learning Trust), a role he has held on a part-time basis for the last 5 years. Bob has now decided to retire in September after 24 years' service. We could not have been luckier to have worked with Bob, I hope his kind and caring nature have continued to have a significant impact on the school. We wish him every happiness in retirement.

As Bob steps down, I have been fortunate to interview for, and be given the role of CEO from September. As you may be aware from previous communications, I have been Director of Education for the trust over the last two years for two days a week. I will be stepping down from the director role as I pick up the responsibilities of CEO and continuing in the role of Headteacher at Edgbarrow. This is only made possible because of the outstanding leadership team here at Edgbarrow. Mr Burges and Mrs Gascoigne (Deputy Heads) will continue in the enlarged role they have held for the past two years, with Mrs Gascoigne taking operational responsibility for Key Stage 3 and Mr Burges at KS4 and 5. My role will also be unchanged, leading the strategic direction of the school. As with this year, the Senior Leadership team will be expanded to include 3 additional associates to provide additional capacity – these roles draw on a fantastic pool of senior middle leaders and provide great development opportunities to support staff retention.

The governors, trustees and myself are keen that this change works for both Edgbarrow and the Trust, and we will continue to monitor standards and workloads.

Summer uniform

We completed a review of uniform two years ago, but have recently received a petition from students regarding hot weather. In particular concern about the blouses and the visibility of sweat marks caused by the colour and material, and a lack of a shorts option to replace trousers. We are looking into whether we can provide some alternatives in time for this summer (which may not be possible given time scales) that may reduce the need for extended periods of non-uniform days, whilst also providing a more comfortable alternative. We will keep you updated.

Jewellery

We made a change last term to allow students to wear a second earring. We hoped this would lead to fewer infringements and more choice for students. The vast majority have followed these changes positively and I know the change was appreciated by many. However, there are a minority that are breaking the rules and we need your support in dealing with this. The earrings should either be studs or those that remain within the shape of the ear, ie nothing dangling and no large hoops. Hoops are only acceptable if they are 'closed' close to the earlobe, ie they do not pose a risk of being caught or ripped off. Earrings should be discrete and appropriate for school use. Uniform rules are tough; we want them to be safe, consistent, appropriate for school and provide a sense of school identity. We

want to reflect student voice, but everyone must follow the rules. Inappropriate jewellery will now be confiscated and detentions issued; we'll go through this in assemblies this week. Your support with this is much appreciated.

Forthcoming exams

My very best wishes to our Year 11, 12 and 13 students who are about to enter their external exam period. We know you and your teachers are working incredibly hard. We have been hearing very positive messages from staff about the efforts being put into preparation both in and out of school. Keep up the hard work, we are looking forward to a bumper set of results.

Specialist Resource Provision

We are currently working with the local authority on hosting a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for up to 25 students from September 2026. If successful, this will include a new build, allowing us to potentially increase places by up to 5 students in each year group. The SRP will focus on students who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a need related to Autism. This could be an exciting development and we will keep you updated on progress.

Finally, we look forward to seeing lots of you enjoying the forthcoming production of Grease in a couple of weeks.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Matthews
Headteacher