



THE PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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20th December 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

Working Together to Ensure Success for the Students of North Devon

As we approach the end of a busy and productive Autumn Term, we would like to thank all parents and carers for the support you have given your children since the start of the new academic year. We know that attending school events can be challenging amongst all the other claims on your time, so thank you for making time to attend Parents' Evenings, carol services, school productions and other school based sessions and events designed to secure the best outcomes possible for your children. Raising aspirations and supporting children to realise their full academic potential, along with developing their skills and interests in other areas, is a "team effort" between home and school.

We do know from professional experience that being a parent presents many challenges, particularly when it comes to setting expectations and also boundaries. To support you we have outlined a few areas where all schools share a common approach; these are shared with you to support any challenging conversations you may be having at home with your children.

Attendance

There is a direct correlation between attendance and students realising their academic potential, hence all students should be aiming for at least 95% if they are going to achieve what they are capable of. All schools have high expectations in this respect.

Uniform and Appearance

All North Devon Schools have a uniform with clear expectations about how it should be worn including facial piercings, jewellery or non-natural hair colour. At a time of year when parents may come under pressure to agree to piercings as presents, it may be helpful to know this!

Bullying and anti-social behaviour

All schools have a zero tolerance for bullying, whether it is face to face bullying or online bullying. There are clear policies for dealing with this, so please do not hesitate to contact the pastoral staff at the school if you are concerned about your child in this respect.

Reading, Homework and Independent Learning

The new GCSEs and A Levels are challenging in terms of both contents and skills. A resilient approach to reading, homework and independent learning are key to student success at this level. All schools begin training students to develop independence and confidence in this respect from Year 7 onwards building on the work of their partner primary schools. Expectations are high and students are given the opportunities, resources and teaching to ensure that they are able to rise to the challenge.

Social Media, Mobile Phones and Screen Time

Many of the issues schools deal with, especially on a Monday morning, stem from incidents on social media between students which have occurred over the weekend. Many students make themselves vulnerable on line despite all schools ensuring that clear advice and guidance is given on how to avoid risks. Your children may try to convince you that it is unreasonable of you to want to check their social media accounts: It is not unreasonable but is key to keeping children safe especially when schools are not in session.

All schools regulate the use of mobile phones and give students advice in limiting their screen time. Again this is something that parents may find challenging to regulate. Experts and parents seem to agree that negotiating a limit

on screen time and setting timers on routers/Wi-Fi connections and games consoles have helped to reduce anxiety, mental health concerns and improve sleep patterns amongst teenagers. We suggest that as groups of parents, you agree to collectively limit childrens' screen time. We have found this to be particularly effective for boys and gaming.

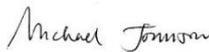
The Festive Season

As we approach the festive season with all the fun and excitement that it brings, we would also like to raise the issue of some of the risks associated with the season. It is a time of year when many young people will be attending parties and possibly experimenting with alcohol and/or drugs. We have a collective responsibility to ensure students have the knowledge and understanding they need to keep themselves safe and deal with the many pressures of growing up. All schools take a very robust line on drugs on site. We all know that taking illegal drugs can ruin the lives of young people. Children can sometimes receive mixed messages about drugs, or come under pressure from peers, to be led to believe that drugs are acceptable or glamorous when they are not. Should you have concerns about your child's use of drugs or alcohol out of school, please do not hesitate to contact us for support. Whilst it is only a very small minority of young people involved, we wanted to make all parents aware to give you the opportunity to talk with your children especially with the approach of the school holidays. Please do contact us if you have a concern about your child or another child.

Finally, thank you once again for your support for all that we are doing as a group of North Devon schools to raise aspirations and to secure excellent outcome for students. We wish you and your families a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.



Dr Claire Ankers
Bideford



Michael Johnson
Chulmleigh



Mr DJ Lewis
South Molton



Graham Hill
Pilton



Sharon Marshall
Ilfracombe



Gareth Roscoe
Park Community School



Atlantic Academy



Great Torrington School