

8th November 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

I thought I would start this week with two reflections. In this week's Sunday message there was a short reflection taken from Roger McGough and he said:

"I was brought up to believe I was lucky. Even though we were poor, I was lucky to be Catholic; to be born in Liverpool – everybody wanted to be born in Liverpool! If I complained about my eyesight, my parents would say "You're lucky you're not blind." My upbringing gave me a sense of confidence even if we didn't have much".
Roger McGough

On a recent mental health course one of key strategies for improving our outlook was to consider gratitude. Not cheerily counting our blessings but deeper than that. Instead posing questions about who or what are we grateful is far more beneficial for our mental wellbeing. I fear in the modern world we can spend far too much time worried about what we don't have or comparing ourselves to others that are perceived to have more. Instead, on the course we were challenged to write a letter to someone we are grateful for and go the next step of actually posting it. The joy of reflecting on a positive supportive influence brings more hope than thinking of those that we feel do us harm.

The second reflection is from the roots of superstition. We commonly use the phrase "touch wood" without considering its origins. It is rooted in our faith. When pilgrims went on perilous journeys to holy sites they would carry a wooden cross and when the going became tough or challenging they would touch the cross for renewed hope and energy. In the same way we can draw on our faith to manage our worries and fears with a little more certainty.

Overall, school attendance continues to improve on last year. It is important to continue to sustain the habits as it makes a clear impact on overall achievement. Just a simple overview of the impact on achievement I wish to share the following:

- 100% attendance mean 0 learning opportunities missed.
- 99% means that there is 5 hours of learning missed.
- 98% equates to 15 hours of learning missed.
- 90% equates to 87.5 hours of learning missed.

It is key to note that a GCSE course is approximately 120 guided learning hours so having attendance even at 90% can have a significant impact on the knowledge and skills required for success.

Further to my letters on 04th October and 18th October, thank you for your support in helping us ensure our uniform standards are high. There are still a few young people wearing false eyelashes, excessive make up and nose studs/rings.

Please can you refer to the uniform policy: (<https://www.stgabrielshigh.stoccat.org.uk/parents/uniform/>) that clearly states make up must be natural looking, and false eye lashes and nose jewellery should not be worn. The research shows that the most successful schools have and uphold high uniform standards, and it is based on this that we will be looking to reform our uniform policy for the start of the Spring term where make-

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up, jewellery and false eye lashes will be readdressed. However, prior to this, we wish to continue our drive on improving our uniform standards so wish to inform you of the following:

- W/C Mon 11th November – Make-up and false eye lashes. We are starting with this first as there are no specific purchases needed to support with this. Students have been informed that if we can see false eyelashes or are able to tell a student is wearing make-up then they will be asked to remove them/it. Form tutors will be provided with make-up wipes to assist with this. Failure to comply will result in the student being given an S4 (Uniform).
- W/C Mon 18th November – Multiple earrings, hooped earrings, nose studs, tongue piercings. We will allow students to wear clear spacers in their nose and in ears. This date allows any students who are unable to remove them to make an appointment at the jewellers they had the piercing done or their GP to have it removed. It also allows time for students/parents to purchase clear spacers. There should be **NO** tongue studs. From the 18th staff will be asking students to remove their piercing (we will provide envelopes and students will have them returned to them at the end of the day) failure to do so will result in an S4 (Uniform)
- W/C Mon 25th November – Ties and trainers. We are hoping this allows yourselves as parents/carers enough time to purchase ties/shoes. If you are struggling financially we have vouchers for shoe zone and our uniform supplier, and are more than happy to assist if this is needed. Please just contact the school office. Staff will be asking students to wear their tie, change into school shoes and/or ensure that a student has the correct uniform, if necessary we will loan them a tie or provide them a pair of plimsols to wear for the day. Failure to comply with these requests to uphold our uniform standards and policy, or a loan of a uniform item needed, it will result in a student being issued an S4 (Uniform).

If you feel there is a medical reason why your child cannot comply to these areas of the school uniform policy please can you provide medical evidence and a medical exemption pass will be issued to your student. Please note we are unable to make exceptions for uniform without the relevant up to date medical evidence.

SPARX maths continues to be a really important resource in raising standards in maths. Research informs that independent practice is essential in embedding numeracy skills. I wish to share with you completion rates for homework across all year groups and want to thank you in supporting us with this key element of home learning.

- Year 7 – 81%
- Year 8 – 80%
- Year 9 – 68%
- Year 10 – 68%
- Year 11 – 71%

Please may I ask that we continue to push the completion of Sparx maths assignments at home.

As always, many thanks for your support in ensuring our students reach their highest potential.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Braithwaite
Interim Headteacher