



Leadership Team:

Barry Doherty (Headteacher)
Natalie Hancock (DSL)
Alan Trainer
Daniel Gent
Yvette Armistead
Lisa De Bruyn

21 June 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you have found time to look at [my letter from last week](#) that explored the student, parent and carer results of the recent RLT-wide stakeholder survey. Thank you for the encouraging feedback and emails since received. I look forward to sharing some updates about the year 11 leavers' celebrations, including last night's year 11 prom and our trip to Thorpe Park on Monday in my letter to you *next week*.

Day for Dominic - Wednesday 3 July 2024

I assume that you have received and read Mr Robinson's recent letter setting out the plans for our day for Dominic. It will be an additional non-school uniform day (£1+) and also provide opportunities for students to participate in an all-day disco – or 'danceathon', or lunchtime disco (£2). As a former number three world champion, I shall be participating - assuming I can find my kilt.

All of the money raised will help support Dominic and his family make adaptations to their home and lives. I visited Dominic and his family at their home earlier this week and know just how much our support means to the entire family.

If you are able to consider a larger donation then please visit [Dominic's GoFundMe page](#). The site contains a little more information about Dominic and his story.



Smartphone Update

You will be aware that I have been communicating with you about smartphones and their impact. A group of parents and carers have been sharing more detailed responses. Overwhelmingly, respondents were very supportive of more assertive action by the school in concert with parents and carers. Some of the comments included:

- Some regrets that 'we' have inadvertently harmed their children's childhoods.
- CNS ought to be a completely phone-free environment.
- Undoubted benefits of new technologies, but they must be balanced with the risks.
- Note a growing international movement to limit smartphone access until aged 14 and social media access until aged 16.
- More sports needed.
- More talking together in the real world needed.
- Parents need to feel okay to step-up and do what they know is right for their kids and not be frightened by what others might think of them being more restrictive / protective.
- Significant impact on a child's concentration and attention span (less than fifteen TikTok seconds).

- Children now see things they should have never seen as children, or adults.
- Noticeably poorer sleeping habits, linked to anxiety.
- Constant worry about what others are saying and doing – the fear of missing out or being talked about.
- The real and online world are full of dangers and we have to continue to show children how to stay safe wherever they roam.

One respondent noted some caution and pointed to research that was less confident of there being a link between smartphones and that broader decline in young people’s mental health. You may recall in my letter to you that I do not claim to be certain of the link but we do, in schools, note the daily misery and instability caused by smartphone access to social media and the Internet.

You will be aware of there being great activity amongst parents and schools in this regard. In the coming weeks, all schools within the River Learning Trust intend to share a common agreed statement about this issue, leaving each school to then consider the best responses in their context.

I will share that statement with you in the next few weeks and this will incorporate a survey that the RLT are creating on behalf of all schools - so that we can all dig a little deeper into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the parents and carers within our own school community. This will help shape our next steps and any changes to our mobile phone policy in school next year.

Year 8 Athletics Triumph (again)

For the eighth time in ten years, Chipping Norton School won their annual athletics meet against the other six secondary schools in the area. There were a great number of fantastic athletes at the competition from all schools. It was clear to see the hours of dedication that had gone into training for the students’ events.

Chipping Norton School recorded a large number of students who broke personal best records. The year 8 boys relay team managed to break the relay record for the second year in a row and Aidan Williams, Year 10, has just been invited to the English Schools

Championships. Mr Robinson writes: “Well done to all of the students who took part and even those who didn’t make the team but have supported by coming to practice sessions and working tirelessly in your lessons.”



And finally

At last, the weather appears to be picking up! With this in mind, and until the end of the summer term, students are not required to wear their blazer (or jumper) to and from or in school. They are not permitted to replace a blazer with a jacket or tracksuit top. If they are chilly then the blazer and jumper can be worn as normal. Thank you for helping us manage this sensible adaptation and avoid those who might seek to take advantage... Meanwhile, come on Scotland and England! Students’ confidence that it is “coming home” is wobbling!

Yours faithfully

Barry Doherty
Headteacher