

# Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Stakes Hill Road  
Waterlooville  
Hampshire  
PO7 7BW

☎ 023 9225 9214

☎ 023 9223 0317

🌐 [www.oaklandscatholicschool.org](http://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org)

✉ [oaklands@oaklandscatholicschool.org](mailto:oaklands@oaklandscatholicschool.org)



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**Headteacher:** Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

26 May 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

As we reach the half-way point in the summer term, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Year 11 and Year 13 students on the fantastic start they have made with their exams. They have behaved responsibly in accordance with the exam regulations and are dedicating large amounts of time to revision, even attending breakfast sessions.

The exam season continues for another few weeks after the Whitsun break, all our exam students need to take time to rest over half term but keep up the hard work – it will be worth it! As Year 11 move towards the end of their exams, it is time for Year 10 to step-up and become the role models for the other year groups. They too, along with Year 12, will have end of year exams in the hall later in the term.

I apologise for the length of this letter, however there are a number of important reminders and new information I have to share with you. We have also been forwarded information on knife crime from Safe4Me, which is part of Hampshire Police information services. This is attached to this letter. Please discuss this with your children.

## Outstanding Items

I am aware that some students in Year 11 and Year 13 may not yet have handed back their textbooks or library books. Please can you ensure your children return these to school as soon as possible. Please also ensure that catering fobs are returned and outstanding debts settled. Thank you.

## Alumni

There are many ways in which former students can enrich the life of the school and we, therefore, strongly encourage those students leaving the school to keep in touch. We are being helped by a national charity called Future First to find and reconnect with former students that have left over the years. They offer opportunities when students leave school to build confidence, skills and their CV. Alumni students will receive a few emails a year sharing news and opportunities to get involved.

Please watch and share [this video](#) with your child to see why former students around the country are joining their old school or college's alumni network. It takes two minutes to sign up, so if your child has not already joined at school, please [click here](#), and make sure they use their own email address, not their school/college email. Older siblings may also want to join, if they are not already enrolled.

## **KS3 into KS4 Transition Evening, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June at 6.00pm**

The KS4 Transition Evening is an important event that all Year 9 parents are strongly advised to attend. In addition to the important curriculum information about the GCSEs, we will be talking to you all about work experience for students in the summer of 2024. We have written to Year 9 parents with more detail via separate letter, a copy of which can be found on the school website, [Letters - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#).

## **Slight Change to End of School Routine**

When we return after half term there will be a small change to the school routine; KS3 students will be escorted down to the drive at 3.25pm as opposed to 3.20pm. KS4 students, which will now include Year 9, who move onto their KS4 timetables, will leave at 3.30pm. There will be no change to the bus times or opening time for the school gates.

## **Student Leadership**

We now have a new student leadership team headed up by Leona Newman and Nadia Norman; their team of students are responsible for various aspects of school life. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the outgoing leaders Blessing Okani and Jem Jeffery - their contribution can be seen in the legacy the new team inherit.

## **Curriculum Events After Half Term**

After half term, the timetable will change to allow Year 9 to begin their GCSE option courses. All students will be issued with both a new lesson timetable and homework timetable (if necessary), in readiness for these changes.

Transition work will also begin in earnest after the break as we begin preparing for our next incoming year group.

## **Challenge Week, 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June**

Mr Bamford sent out information about Challenge Week for Year 7-9 students. The information booklets that were sent out can be found on the school website [Letters - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#). Parental support is vital to ensure that these activities can go ahead.

## **Year 10 Events in the Final Half Term**

The final half term will be very busy for Year 10 with exams and various other events relating to Careers. A separate letter was sent to parents about this, which can be found following [this link](#).

## **Canteen and Food in School**

Over the course of this year the footfall in the canteen has increased significantly. Due to the increased volume of sales, we have been able to keep any increase in costs to a minimum, despite significant variations in wholesale food prices. We will continue to review costs over the next period along with the service we provide. Sadly, we are aware that a small number of students have taken food without paying for it. When this occurs, access to the service will be withdrawn for a period of time.

The school is alive to an escalating hunger crisis among children in families who live in poverty, but are not eligible for free school meals. If your family is suffering from particular hardship, please contact us so that we can help signpost families to support services.

## Toilets

I wrote to you in February detailing the inclusion of CCTV cameras in toilet areas and I did say that I would report back to you this term.

There have been a number of tangible outcomes in monitored areas which include a decrease in instances of low-level vandalism, including littering, and students reporting that the two sets of toilets that are monitored feel safer. We have also seen a significant increase in students reporting issues. These can then be investigated and action taken, contacting parents where necessary. In response to the success of this pilot we would now like to look at other toilet areas where we have little or no coverage, we will continue to monitor the use of CCTV around the school site.

## Uniform Changes for September 2023

As I am sure you will be aware, the Government have updated their guidance in regard to school uniform and asked schools to ensure that branded items are kept to a minimum to keep the cost of purchasing down for parents and carers.

In response to this, we have reviewed our school uniform policy. An updated version can now be found on our website [Policies - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#).

The key changes are that those students who wear a blouse will now be required to wear a plain white reverse blouse, not the blue and white striped one. This change has been made as plain white is far easier to purchase at most mainstream uniform suppliers. Existing students are not expected to purchase a new blouse until they need one, as of September 2023 students in Years 8 - 11 will still be allowed to wear the blue and white stripe blouse.

The only branded item of clothing that students must wear in school is the school blazer. We have worked with Skoolkit to see if they can reduce the cost of this item and some of you may notice that it is now slightly cheaper. If students would like to wear a jumper, they must purchase a branded one, but this is not a uniform requirement.

The school PE kit has also been adapted to limit the number of branded items that need to be purchased. All students are now required to wear the branded PE polo shirt. All other items *can* still be purchased with the Oaklands logo from Skoolkit; alternatively, you can buy these from other retailers. Those students who choose to wear sports leggings must purchase the Oaklands branded ones.

## End of Summer Term

The final day for students in school will be Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July. Staff will be in school the following day undertaking training.

## Term Dates for 2023-2024

Dates for next academic year can be found on our website following [this link](#)

Have a good Whitsun holiday when it arrives and thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn  
**Headteacher**



## Knife Information and Advice for Parents and Carers



Whilst many young people do not carry knives, many also do! This is certainly a topic worthy of a conversation between you and your child as difficult as it may seem; adults have a key role to play in helping young people make the right choices.

This leaflet contains practical advice for parents/carers to support them to reduce the risk of their child carrying a knife; advising what to look for, how to speak about the topic and who to contact if you need more help.

### The Law

#### It is illegal to:

- Sell a knife of any kind to anyone under 18 years old
- Carry a knife in a public place without good reason
- Carry, buy or sell any type of banned knife (see list below)
- Use of any knife in a threatening way (even a legal knife, such as a pocket/Swiss army knife)

To prepare you to talk to your child about knives, refer to the points below:

- It is illegal to carry any knife with intent to use it against another person, even for self-defence
- Police can and will search someone if they believe they are carrying a knife. Police and school staff can also search young people for weapons at school.
- Carrying a knife can lead to arrest, a court hearing and possibly a criminal record or prison sentence. This can have a huge impact on a young person's future; having a criminal record can affect employment, going to university or college or even travelling to some countries.

### What can you do?

As a result of exposure and access to media, young people are more aware of knives than ever before; film, gaming, music often glorifies knives and the idea of carrying one, as such young people may face increased pressure to carry one or to readily accept that their peers do.

It is highly likely your child has talked about knives with friends, heard a story about a youth who carried a knife or read a tragic real knife news story... So what can you do to help your child?



**TALK:** Speak with your child to discover what they know about carrying a knife; discuss their views and opinions and give advice to help them to make safe choices.

Your child may be unsure or unwilling to talk to you about this, be persistent; explain your duty as their parent to keep them safe by addressing issues risks and danger.

Make your child aware of the following points:

#### If you choose to carry a knife....:

- Gives you a false sense of security
- You could arm your attacker, increasing the risk of being stabbed or injured
- You are breaking the law

#### Advice...

- You always have a choice!
- Do not ever carry a knife
- Walking away from a knife confrontation
- Don't give in to peer pressure

**Explain:** Working together increases the chances of you staying away from serious harm and not breaking the law; reassure your child that they can always speak to you if they have an issue.



## Information for Parents and Carers



**LOOK OUT:** Young people commonly decide to start carrying a knife because they feel threatened; look out for signs that may suggest your child is feeling this way.

Be aware of the following signs and triggers:

- Not happy at school/not wanting to go
- They've recently been a victim of theft/bullying/mugging
- Having a different network of friends who may be older than your child

Remind your child that they should always walk away if confronted with any threat of violence



## Support to help you give support



There are numerous organisations to provide help to parents concerned about their child. You can contact your local authority for a list of local groups and organisations in your area who can offer advice and information.

Below is a list of national organisations who can offer help and advice

**KnifeCrimes.org:** an online knife crime resource offering advice and support; includes a forum to share and read views from parents and experts on knife crime in the UK. Visit [www.knifecrimes.org](http://www.knifecrimes.org)

**Parentline Plus:** a national charity that works for and with parents to give advice on all aspects of parenting. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call free on 0808 800 22 22 or access the website [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Victim Support:** a national charity can help you and your child if they have been a victim of knife crime. [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org) or call 0845 30 30 900

**Hampshire Police:** to find details of your local team and find out more about any youth work they are doing in your area visit [www.hampshire.police.uk](http://www.hampshire.police.uk) or call 101

If you would like to find out more information about knife possession, visit the government website at [www.direct.gov.uk/talkaboutknives](http://www.direct.gov.uk/talkaboutknives)

## Reporting Crime



If you or your child knows of someone who carries a knife, you can report them anonymously using crime stoppers or fearless



Contact Hampshire Constabulary on 999 if you or your child is at immediate risk of harm

## Top Tips to Keep Your Child Safe

1. Talk to your child
2. Reassure them they can come to at anytime
3. Watch out for signs and triggers
4. Know where they are and who they are with
5. Pay attention to their belongings – the may be hiding something
6. Inform them of how to anonymously report a person they know to carry a knife
7. Make sure they know how to get support when and is needed
8. Encourage your child to get involved in positive activities and interests - keep them focussed and off the streets to reduce risk of harm and crime