

Our Ref: DD/PW  
Date: October 2011



Sedgefield  
Community  
College

Dear Parent / Carer,

I would like to start my first newsletter of the new academic year by welcoming our new year seven students to the college. Students have once again adapted to their new surroundings and settled into lessons very quickly. I wish them all a happy and successful five years at their college.

### **New college uniform**

The start of the new term also saw the final stage of the introduction of the new college uniform. Our new year seven students, in the green uniform, have replaced the outgoing year eleven cohort who were the final year group permitted to wear the old black uniform. Parents are reminded of our strict policy on footwear; the college uniform states that **“only plain black school shoes with no visible markings or brandings are permissible”**. I have enclosed pictures of footwear which clearly does not meet the description of acceptable shoes. If parents are in any doubt they should contact their child’s Year Manager. Over the past year it has been pleasing to receive the numerous positive comments from parents, the local community and students themselves who have been overwhelmingly supportive of the change. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to parents / carers for supporting us as we continue to strive to raise the standards of everything we do at Sedgefield.

### **Record breaking student performance**

This time last year I wrote to parents to comment upon the examination success of our year eleven students in 2010. At that time students had recorded the best results ever produced at the college and by quite some distance, with a huge improvement on the number of students achieving 5 or more A\*- C grades, and improvements across almost all subjects including notable improvements in both Maths and English. I am delighted to report that our class of 2011 has now surpassed this previous record breaking performance with their achievements this past summer.

Sedgefield has now become one of the most improved schools in County Durham in terms of student attainment, and I am now confident that recent and significant developments across all functions of the college have created a foundation for this trend of rapid improvement and high standards to continue. My congratulations of course go to the students who achieved this year’s impressive performance, but also to college staff who have worked so hard to embed the changes in practice that we have introduced.

### **Advanced Healthy Schools status**

Having already achieved healthy schools status a number of years ago, recent developments in how the college encourages its students to adopt practices that will ensure their health and well being has lead it to be awarded Advanced Healthy Schools status.

### **Progress of the new building**

Although we have now been in our new building since January it has already begun to feel like we have always been here! Staff and students have now fully settled into their new surroundings and the bright

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*A C H I E V E @ S e d g e f i e l d*

*Aspiration - Community - High expectations - Independence - Excitement - Valued - Enjoyment*

contemporary feel of the building is without doubt having a positive impact upon learning and the culture we are striving to create.

It is credit to the students that they have settled in so well given that the college isn't entirely finished. Hopefully, though we will soon see the end of builders on site as the new Hawthorn Road access and car parks are now being created ahead of schedule following delays in the demolition of the old college building.

It is anticipated that the access road and car parks will be available from after the half term break and therefore parents visiting the college are asked to enter the college from Hawthorn Road once more.

### **Forthcoming Examinations**

During November and January we have our next round of GCSE examinations. These examinations involve large numbers of year 10 and year 11 students and strong performance is crucial to overall success in the subjects involved. Examination timetables will be issued to those students concerned in the near future. Parents are asked to check these timetables carefully with their sons and daughters and ensure that students prepare themselves as well as they can.

### **GCSE Science Half Term Coursework Sessions**

Monday – Triple Award GCSE Biology/Chemistry/Physics Investigations (11b1)

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Wednesday- Double Award GCSE Science Case Study (11b2)

Thursday – Double Award GCSE Science Case Study (11b3)

Friday- Double Award GCSE Science Case Study (11g1)

### **Holidays in Term Time**

Again I must stress the importance of student attendance at school on every possible occasion. Students from Year 9 upwards now sit final GCSE examinations throughout the school year not just in the Summer of Year 11. This year, although rare, we have had occasions where students have missed either an examination, or the vital preparation work on the lead up to the examinations which has either led to no grade being awarded or significantly poorer performance than would have been expected.

### **Health and Safety**

May I take this opportunity to remind those parents, who drop students off / pick students up from school, not to come onto school grounds at any time, this includes before school starts and after it ends.

This is for health and safety reasons.

### **Report of suspicious behavior**

Some parents may be aware of a reported incident in Ferryhill recently where a student from Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College reported an approach by a man in a white Astra van. Following this incident there have been similar reports around the region that the police are also investigating. I ask that parents draw their child's attention to this worrying behaviour and how to remain safe. As usual we will continue to reinforce this message through our activities in school.

### **Parent Governor Vacancy**

We have one vacancy for a parent governor; please see enclosed information for more details.

### **Work Experience**

At the end of March the Government withdrew its funding for Education Business Links which effectively provided the funding that allowed all Year 10 students to attend a week of work experience each year. As a result, like other schools, we have had to review our full programme of Work Related Learning. As a result of this review, this academic year we will no longer offer all students the opportunity to attend a

work experience placement as it is simply unaffordable. However, we do intend to increase the proportion of our own school budget allocated to Work Related Learning with the aim of creating a better more focussed programme that will compensate for some of the lost benefits of work experience.

### **Revaluer machines**

As you are aware, the school operates a cashless catering system, which allows your child to 'load up' his/her account with money during the week. Where possible could parents please provide children with coins instead of notes as sometimes where notes have been in pockets/bags they can become crumpled and the machine will not accept them. Due to the fact that we operate a cashless system we are not always able to change these notes.

### **Enrichment Activities**

This year it is the aim of the college to relaunch a new 'bigger and better' programme of enrichment activities available to our students on Wednesdays each week from 3.15 until 4.15.

Last academic year, without necessarily drawing parents' attention to it, we concentrated our efforts upon creating a lunchtime enrichment programme that provided students with opportunities to get involved in Sport, the Arts and other Year based activities.

We will soon be providing students with a menu of activities to choose from which will begin after the half term break. It is the intention to expand this menu over the year as we identify more providers from outside the college who are able to offer an activity.

As in the past the college will continue to provide student transport to those students attending enrichment activities who would usually travel on school buses.

### **Possible Industrial Action 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

Parents are asked to note the intention of a number of public sector unions to ballot for industrial action (in response to pension reforms) to begin on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Should the ballots being held support industrial action it is inevitable that this will have some impact upon the ability of the college to function. I will inform parents of any adjustments I feel necessary once the outcome of the ballot is known.

### **Key Dates for this academic year**

|                            | <b>School closes to Students</b>      | <b>School open for teaching</b>          |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Summer 2011</b>         | Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2011   | Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2011 |
| <b>Autumn Half Term</b>    | Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> October 2011  | Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2011     |
| <b>Christmas 2011</b>      | Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2011 | Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2012   |
| <b>Spring Half Term</b>    | Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2012 | Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2012    |
| <b>Easter</b>              | Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2012  | Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2012       |
| <b>Spring Bank Holiday</b> | Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2012       | Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> May 2012         |
| <b>Summer Half Term</b>    | Thursday 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2012    | Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2012        |
| <b>Summer 2012</b>         | Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> July 2012     | Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2012 |

## Website

Some parents will realize that we have recently launched our new college website. There are areas that are not yet complete (For example, the calendar) but hopefully these issues will be addressed in the coming weeks. I hope that this website provides students and parents with a useful source of information. Please note the college now has its own Twitter feed on our website, however should parents like to receive tweets instantly on smart phones etc they should go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and input our identity, which is sccachieve.

## Visitors to the college

Being a recently opened new school, unsurprisingly during the Summer term we have had numerous visits from people interested in seeing how our building functions and how it is helping (or not) to impact positively upon the quality of the education we are able to provide your children.

It has provided me with a great sense of pride and satisfaction that amongst the overwhelming positive comments that we have received, almost all visitors have commented upon the calm, purposeful and pleasant feel that the college has. In the case of many visitors it has been some time since they have visited the college and to say that they left gob smacked by the change in culture is no understatement. As I have pointed out to visitors, the shift in culture has not come about by chance, or as the result of being in a new building. Rather, it is the result of the collective efforts and desire on the part of staff, students and parents to play their part in a team effort to raise standards, and create a school that we can all be proud to be part of that has led us to where we are now, and provide us with the platform to develop further.

Once again, my thanks to parents for their continuing support.

Yours sincerely



Dave Davies  
Headteacher

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