Head of School Weekly Update

Welcome to the end of week update.

This week's update contains operational reminders and some key information for different student groups.

As always, I hope that you find this useful!

UCAS deadlines

I wanted to provide some clarification around the approaching UCAS deadline on Wednesday 31st January at 18:00pm for Year 13 students. This deadline is set by UCAS and is for all undergraduate applications to receive equal consideration.

We know that students are becoming increasingly worried about when their applications will be sent off, however, please rest assured that universities **do not** fill their spaces on a first come first serve basis. A snippet taken from the UCAS website states: "This is our 'equal consideration' deadline, which means course providers **must** consider all applications received by this time equally."

Once your son/daughters application has been approved, the next stage is for their tutor to compile their three subject references, add these to UCAS alongside their predicted grades and only then can a final check of the whole application can be completed before sending. We are all working hard to do this, but please do bear with us as we process a significant number of applications around our usual teaching and work schedules.

Please also note that we are working through these in order that students submitted to us (from those that met the initial 8th December internal deadline).

We will ensure that **all** student applications that have met our (extended) internal deadline of 19th January (today), at 3pm are sent off prior to the 31st January deadline. Separate communications have been sent directly to parents/guardians of students whose UCAS is still outstanding.

Safeguarding information – difficult conversations

We encourage all of our students to be open about things that are concerning them and things that become a worry. Especially as we move into the period of the academic year where students begin to feel more stress and anxiety, this becomes more important than ever.

At UTCR we use an open door policy, the Whisper Button, suggestion boxes and regular talks with our safeguarding team to encourage students to engage with us, even when the topic might feel difficult.

We are really keen to work together with our whole community to encourage this open dialogue to support our students and we are aware these conversations can sometimes be difficult.

I have included the NSPCC guidance to approaching difficult conversations with children as a supportive guide to our community. You can access the guide here: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/talking-about-difficult-topics/

If you are worried about a student then please do contact a member of the safeguarding team for support and advice.

GCSE Pod – Revision app and website for Year 10

We are pleased to share that your child now has access to GCSEPod's library of over 6,500 'Pods', 3-5 minute videos designed to deliver knowledge in short bursts. GCSEPod makes learning and revision much more manageable: every Pod is mapped to an exam board, and contains all the right facts, quotes, keywords, dates and annotated diagrams that your child needs for GCSE success – all neatly organised into topics and exam playlists.

One of the best things about GCSEPod is that it is so easy to access! You can download any Pod to your child's mobile device, and then they can watch them at any time, in any place, with or without internet. It's like they're carrying a whole set of textbooks in their pocket. Make sure you download the GCSEPod app from the App Store (Apple and Android are supported) to access this feature.

As well as Pods, GCSEPod also has a host of Student Learning Activities which are designed to help students commit content to their long-term memory. Alongside this is the award-winning Check & Challenge tool which provides quizzes for your child to test their knowledge and to track their progress throughout the academic year. Check & Challenge provides scaffolded support through hints, multiple choice options and feedback statements which helps to consolidate learning and build students' confidence.

For more ways to support your child using GCSEPod, please visit www.gcsepod.com/parents where you'll find lots more information, a specially created Parent Toolkit with information on making the most of your child's subscription and links to their fantastic upcoming parent/carer webinars: https://www.gcsepod.com/podup-presents-parent-webinars/

Students have received their log in details for GCSE Pod and should be able to access the system immediately to make use of it.

Any student having issues logging into the system needs to contact Jennie for support.

Berkshire Careers Opportunities

In partnership with our local Berkshire Careers Hub, we are very pleased to share their current opportunities website so that you can keep up to date with opportunities up and coming in the area. This includes opportunities such as work experiences, careers insight talks, apprenticeship opportunities, as well as information about jobs in the local area: https://www.berkshireopportunities.co.uk/employers-and-educators/opportunities-for-you-to-share/

Parent feedback form

I would like to again remind our community that we appreciate any feedback you would like to share with us.

We will be hosting further face to face parent events over the coming weeks, however, If you aren't able to attend, we would be very grateful to hear your feedback via this form. We will also be running sessions for parents of children with SEND and will share information about this in due course.

Key Contact Details

Senior Leadership Team

Executive Principal – Wayne Edwards

Head of School – Jennie Thomson

Assistant Principal – Stephanie Mitchell

Assistant Principal – Lee Reynolds

Assistant Principal – Richa Pareek

Acting Assistant Head of School – Anderson Ramdeen

Safeguarding Team

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Jennie Thomson

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads – Anderson Ramdeen, Jackie Wynter, Wayne Edwards, Stephanie Mitchell, Charlotte Tennant, Julie Hooper

SEN Team

Trust Lead for SEN and Safeguarding – Linda Stevens

SEN Coordinator – Siua Abnett

Curriculum Leadership Team

Director of Maths – Lewis Hart

Director of English – Thomas Trayers

Acting Director of Science – Carly Gale

Director of Design, Engineering and Technology – Jamie Chandler

Director of Computing – Ian Scott

Wishing our whole community a safe and restful weekend,

Kind regards

J.A.Thomson

Jennie Thomson

Head of School