

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Please accept our half-termly newsletter regarding sixth form and FUS. There are messages from the key members of the sixth form team regarding the remainder of the year, pastoral care and the process of writing statements for university and apprenticeship applications. We will work to make this shorter and more accessibly in future but please do take the time to check what's happening in sixth form and how it affects your son or daughter.

Mr Jones – Head of Sixth Form – Developments within Sixth Form

The changes we have all had to contend with over the last year have meant that starting sixth form for year 12 has been anything but straight forward, they have adapted and coped brilliantly well and are now getting ready to fill the shoes of the departing year 13's who leave very soon. As the circumstances begin to change and look more promising, I am pleased to let you know of a few things that are planned for summer term.

Our delayed "Safe Drive" program, which educates young drivers about the responsibility and dangers associated with being a young driver, will happen next half term. We will also begin to build momentum towards November's 'Big Sleep' to raise money for homeless charities. So far the sixth form has raised over £10,000 for charities and the Big Sleep is a large part of this. I hope to engage year 12 in this fund raiser and get them involved in raising awareness of the issue of homelessness in the UK.

Over the summer we will be investing in sixth form facilities to give students a top class learning experience that will prepare them for higher education, apprenticeships or employment. Plans are continuing to develop in respect of our 6th form study centre, our aim is to accommodate more students and provide individual learning spaces to ensure that independent study time is highly effective and contributes towards the best outcomes possible. Thanks to our year 12's, supported by Mrs Curchin, the work culture in our study centre is excellent, this will set a tone and a standard that new students joining the sixth form will see and want to emulate, creating a high achieving habit that ensures completing a full and focussed days' work is the norm.

As Head of sixth form I would like to recognise the resilience and strength year 12 have demonstrated and I know they are preparing well for their June continuation exams. These will be the first formal exams they have taken for a long time so the time they invest now in preparing for these year 12 exams will be rewarded in year 13 with increased subject knowledge and confidence in their own abilities.

I sincerely hope that this time next year we are preparing for leavers day and graduation and that this current year group gets a much better end to the journey compared the beginning.

Nadia Abdulgani – Pastoral manager – Mental Health Support

It has been a busy year in the Pastoral Office, particularly for Year 12 students who have gone through so much in the past 14 months. They've lost the exams they worked so hard for, coming of age milestones such as driving lessons and the Year 11 Prom, socialisation with their peers which is

so vital for people of their age, along with all the other sacrifices we have had to make as a nation. Their mental health has, understandably, taken a hit, and our priority this year has been supporting them with rebuilding their confidence and resilience as we migrate to our new 'normal'. Each student has been given a laminated card to keep in their wallets if they experience mental health difficulties and need support. Organisations such as Childline, Kooth and Dorset Mind are among those listed. It is important that mental health is no longer a taboo and can be discussed openly, therefore we encourage you as a family to regularly talk to one another. Young people often hide how they are feeling in fear of appearing weak or shaming/stressing their families; therefore presenting an environment, which makes them feel safe to open up, may reveal if they have been suffering in silence. Don't hesitate to contact your doctor if you are worried about your child's health, or you can email Nadia for advice: Nadia@fernup.dorset.sch.uk

A useful website for your child to use if they are struggling to understand why they are feeling the way they do is: <https://www.studentsagainstdepression.org/>

By working together, we can ensure that every young person has an opportunity to enjoy good mental health.

Mr Martin – Head of Year 13 – Starting to apply to university and apprenticeships for Year 12 students

We are expecting students to be working on their personal statements, apprenticeship statements and future choices much more actively now. I need to explain to you some of the details of this process. This email is mostly concerned with **UCAS (University and Colleges Admission Service)** statements, but apprenticeship statements are also needed – there will be a concurrent programme of support for writing apprenticeship statements broadly following the same deadlines and structure.

In terms of deadlines, UCAS statements are expected to be complete by the end of this term (**July 16th to be exact**), ready for students to send their actual applications early in the autumn term. We will be running some sessions later this term for students to access the UCAS website, register and start the other elements of the process.

Student's statements are clearly affected by what course they're applying for and what field they hope to work in. If students are unsure of this, then that is equally important for them to think about and work on. Encouraging students to talk to their teachers, tutors and sixth form staff, will all help. If students wish to have an extension of the deadline for your statement whilst you consider your options, then please ask. See <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/after-gcses/find-career-ideas/explore-jobs> and <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-where-study> for starters - these pages have lots of links to click on so go for it, and UCAS generally has other areas for writing applications for university, apprenticeships and so on. Perhaps the most important piece of information is that statements are **limited to 4000 characters, including spaces, and 47 lines of writing.**

Students will be writing their statement through a Teams notebook for the time being. They have recently been added to a **UCAS, Careers, Apprenticeships and Employment Team** by Mr Jones. Eventually, they will copy and paste their statement from the Teams Notebook into their online application, but for the time being they should be writing it online in their dedicated folder within the notebook of this team. They can also find guidance, exemplars, templates, suggestions and advice for their statement writing in this team. We have started to introduce this team and notebook to students this week. **School will only be looking at statements through the teams page so no printed copies being handed to staff please.**

We encourage students to ask the FUS staff for comments on their statement. This should be done by students asking teachers to check their statement and directing them to the teams notebook page – it would be good to keep this all online and paperless. That way, one member of staff can see another’s comments. Students need to make sure they consider the advice given and make changes where it is an issue of good English. Please, if students are asking for advice, they need to make sure they follow that advice and improve your statement. **Students should also limit the number of times they ask staff to check their statement – after 4 sets of comments, it should really be up to the student to take on board the advice and make the corrections.**

There are lots of staff available to help with these applications:

- **Mr Martin and Mrs Lloyd Smith** – these are the school leads for administering the ucas process with many years of experience checking applications and statements.
- **Mr Ling and your tutors** – they have all helped many years of sixth form tutor groups through the process, and they know the students perhaps the best of your sixth form staff.
- **Subject teachers** – teachers will be graduates in the subjects they’re teaching and hence are a good source of advice for statements for corresponding courses.
- **Mrs Curchin and Miss Giles** in the library are also on hand. Mrs Giles has worked for universities directly in the admissions department and has invited all students to join an applications ‘Personal Statements’ team online.

Students should have a look at the **UCAS, Careers, Apprenticeships and Employment** team as soon as possible and get started. I look forward to seeing as many of their statements, both university and apprenticeship, as possible and to seeing them get sent off around October/November at the head of the queue and with an excellent chance of success.

Head of Year 12 Mr Ling

Despite the disruptions to teaching due to covid, year 12 have made consistent progress across the year and this is down to their hard work and perseverance. Their continuation exams start in two weeks, from June 21st to June 23rd. These exams will test student’s knowledge of the year 12 course and will be an accurate reflection of their understanding and ability. These exams will measure their progress so far and judge their suitability to progress into year 13. Students should have been revising for some time now going over their year 12 content in preparation for these exams. We hope and expect all students to perform well in these tests. Where students grade significantly below their targets the sixth form team will have appropriate conversations with students to identify any obstacles to learning and offer the chance of a resit test to give students the chance to prove themselves at this level.

Students have had guidance on good revision techniques and exercises through their tutor time and in their lessons. At this stage students should be attempting exam style questions and identifying any weak areas in their understanding to help ensure there are no unpleasant surprises in the tests. If students are at all concerned they should speak to their tutor or their subject teachers. Needless to say we wish all our students good luck for these tests and a successful conclusion to the year.

As always, there is lots happening at FUS Sixth Form. If you ever have any concerns, please email sixthform@fernup.dorset.sh.uk

Best wishes,
The Sixth Form Team