



VERULAM
SCHOOL

Headteacher: Julie Richardson

Brampton Road
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL1 4PR
Tel: 01727 766100

www.verulamschool.co.uk
Email: head@verulam.herts.sch.uk

26th April 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Developments at Verulam

I hope you had a wonderful Easter break with your family and friends. As we return for the first part of the Summer term, and approach the busy examination season, I wanted to inform you of some developments at the school so that you are aware of what we are working on as a staff body.

IBSC member

I am pleased to announce that this academic year, Verulam School became a member of the IBSC (International Boys' School Coalition). IBSC membership connects us with dynamic professionals around the globe who share a commitment and passion for advancing schools and the learning experiences of boys. As an organisation, the IBSC seeks to enhance the culture within boys' schools to unlock the potential of boys around the world by improving educational practices. Boys' schools foster high-quality attributes within boys and promote their ability to:

- Become good men;
- Live with integrity, resilience, and strength of character;
- Build compassionate and supportive natures;
- Think creatively and imaginatively;
- Forge strong friendships and camaraderie that last a lifetime;
- Listen and communicate better;
- Create a passion for the arts – music, drama, dance, visual arts, and more;
- Navigate the world of social media thoughtfully; and build the foundation for many more desirable attributes on their journey to adulthood.

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As IBSC members, we gain exclusive access to the IBSC **Why a School for Boys?** resources, Continued Professional Development opportunities for staff and access to the IBSC Action Research, a program that encourages collaboration among educators in member schools around the world. To date, researchers have completed hundreds of projects and reported unique data at IBSC Annual Conferences in South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. More than 300 school faculty members have participated in the program. Many of those 300 action researchers felt so inspired by the experience they have become instructional leaders for action research in their schools. Each September, the IBSC announces the topic for the next round of action research and invites applications from teachers in member schools.

In addition, staff will now have the opportunity to participate in the premier professional development opportunity for boys' educators, the **IBSC Annual Conference**, which highlights the best learning practices for boys. Hosted by member schools around the world, the global gathering of boys' educators creates the ideal environment for collaboration and idea sharing. Throughout the year regional conferences and online classes delivered to members' desktops continue the exciting knowledge exchange.

Our staff also get access to:

- A growing list of books for boys' educators that provide valuable insight for our community. IBSC global research initiatives and reports.
- IBSC's quarterly newsletter, *The Compass*.
- An expanding repository of transgender resources to help member schools better understand the needs and experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming students, faculty, staff, and parents.
- IBSC member logo to display on member school websites and letterhead.
- The IBSC Exploring Boys' Education Podcast. Opportunities to participate in the IBSC Teacher Exchange program.
- A searchable IBSC Member Directory so we can connect easily with colleagues worldwide. Searchable career postings at IBSC member schools to recruit new talent.

A number of the UK's most elite boys' schools are members of the IBSC and we have already begun to develop strong relationships with these schools, organising visits and sharing good practice. This is a fantastic opportunity not only for the staff at Verulam but also for our students, as we hope to utilise these links and develop collaborative learning opportunities, trips and visits.

Let's Talk About Boys

This term, Verulam School will host its first boys' educators conference in conjunction with the IBSC. We have been working hard on the first event of its kind at Verulam, developing expertise as educators of boys.

Our event, Let's Talk About Boys, will take place on Saturday 20th May and will feature the following Keynote speakers:

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- [Matt Pinkett](#) – teacher and author of *[‘Boys Don’t Try – Rethinking Masculinity in Schools’](#)* and *[‘Boys Do Cry’](#)*
- [Andrew Bernard](#) – *What makes a man?*
- [Dr Kathy Weston](#) – Tooled Up Education
- Dr Stuart Lawrence – author of *[‘Silence is Not an Option’](#)*
- [Asma Mansuri](#) – Potential Solutions and Samaritans
- [Tom Batty](#) – Chairman of the IBSC

Teachers from across the country are attending this special event, to discuss, share and problem solve some of the issues unique to educating boys. As a result of the work that we have been carrying out with the IBSC, we are privileged that our staff will also have the opportunity to network and attend workshops on the day delivered by other member schools such as [Harrow School](#).

To date, some of the schools that will be attending are:

- St Paul’s School
- Harrow School
- Hitchin Boys School
- Challney High School for Boys
- St Albans School
- The Bishop’s Stortford High School
- Aylesbury Grammar School
- Berkhamsted Boys School
- Shrewsbury House School
- Haberdashers’ Boys’ School
- Chiltern Academy
- London Enterprise Academy

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Lead

This term, we appointed a new EDI lead at Verulam, Mr Curcic. I’m sure that you will join me in congratulating him on this promotion. Supported by our Senior Prefects and our EDI link governor, Mrs Bola Macarthy, Mr Curcic will be leading the school in its mission to achieve the [HfL Well-being Quality Mark](#).

He will be focusing on the threshold indicators that help schools review and reflect on wellbeing in terms of:

- belonging and inclusion;
- wellbeing and mental health through the curriculum;
- wider wellbeing;
- pupil agency;
- social and cultural capital for wellbeing;

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- therapeutic approaches to behaviour and wellbeing;
- staff wellbeing; and
- staff training.

Belonging and Inclusion is particularly important to us as a school. Verulam is currently one of the most diverse schools in St Albans. Our aim is that all students feel known and loved; feeling comfortable in their own skin and not adhering to societal pressures to conform. We want all of our students to embrace their unique identity and seek to celebrate who they are.

On this topic, I would like to share a few of the things that we have introduced over the past 18 months to support staff and pupils:

- We operate a faith calendar and host a range of assemblies and events for pupils, to educate them about different faiths and beliefs, so that they understand and get the opportunity to experience them i.e. Holi – festival of colours, Chinese New Year, Eid.
- We do not have a [hair policy](#) at Verulam. The hair policy was removed in September 2021 as part of our vision to create a school where all students are known and loved, feel comfortable in their own skin and accept their unique identity. To date, we are the only school that has done this.
- We promote equality and the 9 Protected Characteristics, as detailed in the Equality Act 2010, across the school and we introduced the [Sharp System](#) to allow students to report any form of concern, bullying or discrimination to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- We conduct termly PASS surveys (Pupils Attitudes to School and Self) and weekly Student Voice panels to identify and address any issues that students might have.
- Our Heads of Department are developing the curriculum in their areas to make them more diverse and inclusive. For example, in History in Year 7, following from studying the Normans, students now look at a Western African leader in Mali, Mansu Musa, one of the wealthiest leaders in history - a positive representation of Africa and Islam. Students look at the culture and society in comparison to those explored in England. In English, students study texts in KS3 such as 'Small Island' that focus on the Windrush generation and in Religious Education, GCSE pupils now study Christianity and Islam.
- We now have PSHE/RSE and Citizenship lessons once per fortnight for all students in Key Stage 3&4 to ensure that the development of students that are able to develop positive relationships, have tolerance and respect for others and make a positive contribution to society is prioritised.
- We have an inclusive [Sixth Form Dress Code](#). In addition to professional attire, students may also wear cultural or religious dress if they wish to.
- We have worked with staff to train and develop a Menopause Policy to support female staff, and now also offer an Employee Assisted Programme (EAP) that provides a range of services, such as free counselling.
- We now have a 50:50 male/female teacher ratio.

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- We have a more diverse [Senior Leadership Team](#) than in previous years, as well as across the main teaching staff.
- We have a range of skin tone plasters in First Aid.
- Every year for Black History Month, we invite a range of successful black role models to visit to talk. Recent speakers have included [Reuben Arthur](#), [Stephen Asamoah-Duah](#), [April Koyejo-Audiger](#)
- We have a bank of uniform available for any pupils experiencing hardship.
- We offer a daily prayer space for KS4&5 students and a space for Friday prayers.
- We run the annual [Smile-ing Boys' Project](#) for Year 9 black boys to explore and celebrate culture, identity and masculinity.
- We run the [Kiyon Prince Foundation](#) 'Future Champions' programme for boys in Year 11 to support students that are experiencing challenges in their life.
- We have made a significant investment into books for the library that are by a diverse range of authors and on a diverse range of topics such as race, masculinity and LGBTQ+.
- We have an LGBTQ+ support group 'Happy As I Am'.
- We have a Young Carers support group.
- We organise a range of speakers to visit the school to speak to students on a number of topics such as: misogyny in society, masculinity, domestic violence, respect, County Lines, LGBTQ+, and unconscious bias.
- We have had staff training on unconscious bias by the HfL Race Equality Advisor.
- We have moved SEND provision to the house at the front of the school, now named the Inclusion Hub. The space has been refurbished for SEND pupils and interventions such as Read Write Inc, The Prince's Trust and ASDAN are offered.
- We offer free counselling for some students.
- We prioritise all trips for SEND and PP pupils – reserving places for these pupils and phoning parents to encourage take up.
- We have significantly decreased the number of branded items in our uniform for September 2023 to support families with the cost of living crisis.
- We provide Christmas hampers with food and gifts for our refugee families to support them in what is a challenging holiday.

These are just some of the things that we have been doing to support the diverse range of students and staff at Verulam. We do our best to provide what we can, however, as you will be aware, school budgets are increasingly strained across the country. We would be grateful for any donations of uniform for our hardship stock or any financial assistance that you might be able to give through our Verulam Charitable Trust.

Funding challenges make us more reliant than ever on the involvement and support of our community. It is only through the support and generosity of parents, grandparents, our PTA and our Alumni that we can continue to provide the opportunities we aspire to and help

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students to fulfil their potential. We ask our parents, grandparents and wider community to consider making a monthly or single donation to the Verulam Charitable Trust.

We know that for some this is difficult and might not be achievable every month, but we ask you to please give what you feel able to. The Government's Gift Aid scheme allows us to reclaim tax on donations, which means that for every £1 you give to VCT, we can reclaim 25p from the Inland Revenue. All the monies received will be used to add value to our students' education, giving them opportunities to flourish in ways that Verulam School would not otherwise be able to afford.

To Donate

The simplest and most effective way to contribute is through a Gift Aid donation or to purchase an item from our Wishing Tree. If you are passionate about a particular faculty listed on our Wishing Tree, then donate towards its development?

Please email finance@verulam.herts.sch.uk and they will be happy to help you set up a donation or help arrange for a Wishing Tree item to be purchased.

Current **Wishing Tree** items are:

- New books for the library £500
- New text books in Business Studies £300
- New furniture in English £1000
- Prowise boards £2K each
- Table tennis tables for the back playground – Approximate cost £900 each
- Heavy duty recycled picnic benches for outdoor spaces – Approximate cost £250 each



KickOff@3

On Saturday 24th June, KickOff@3 will be hosting a charity football tournament at Oaklands College. [KickOff@3](#) is a St Albans based charity that seeks to raise awareness and funds for a range of charities that promote physical and mental well-being in young people. Kick Off@3 aims to see less youth violence and hate crime and an increase in mental health awareness, physical fitness and inclusion in sports across the UK.

Verulam School is working with KickOff@3 to support this wonderful community event which seeks to bring community leaders together to support young people through sport. Any 11-12-year-old boys that wish to enter a team of 10, will also be invited to attend the KickOff@3 National Finale. Over the coming weeks, Mr Errington will be working with students to see how many would like to enter a team into the tournament.

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If you are a business owner and would be willing to make a charitable donation to help the event take place, or are able to provide any support such as providing a food stall, music, arts/crafts or you are a qualified referee and would be willing to support by refereeing some of the games, please do not hesitate to get in touch via admin@verulam.herts.sch.uk

PTA

Finally, on Saturday 23rd April the PTA hosted the first Summer Ball post-Lockdown. It was a fantastic event to raise money for the school. I would like to publicly thank Bernadette and all of the PTA for the fantastic job they did in transforming the school, and thank all of the parents that turned out in all their finery to support.

The PTA is an essential part of the school and a constant source of support. If any parents are able to support the PTA, even if just for a few hours here and there, this would be a tremendous support. If you are interested, please email verulamschoolpta@gmail.com

I hope that this letter has given you a taste of the direction of the school and what we are working on as a staff body. If you have any questions or queries about anything mentioned, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Miss J Richardson
Headteacher

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