

Headteacher's Bulletin

September 2024 Edition

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this edition of the monthly bulletin finds you and your families well. It has been a great start to term. School has felt calm, and I have seen so much focus, effort and teamwork in lessons.

Start of the new academic year

It was a lovely start to the new year with our new Year 7 families joining us before school on day one for a family breakfast with staff. This is the first time we have held this event at Ratton, and based on its success this year, we will aim to do so again next year too. I've been pleased to see our new students take the challenges of secondary school in their stride and settle in well. I've dropped in on several of their lessons, and I've been impressed with how they have already shown they can meet the different demands of secondary school. There is a real eagerness to learn and work with us, and some fantastic effort being put in. I spoke to them earlier this term in assembly about our virtues and how we expect students to show these at school. Year 7 students have risen to this challenge and have shown real responsibility – our focus virtue for term one during our tutor time virtues curriculum sessions.

It was also great to see so many families at the Year 7 Success Evening earlier in the month. We felt the evening gave us a chance to meet some new faces and build on the foundations of a crucial parent/carer and school partnership fostered from induction meetings onwards. If you are a new family to Ratton, do be aware that you can access curriculum details to support your child here: [Curriculum| Ratton](#) - click on the subject links to access medium term plans teachers use to deliver in the classroom, and key lists of vocabulary you can help your child with at home.

Year 11

It is a vitally important year for our senior students in Year 11, and to help prepare them for their next steps post-16 Mrs Peters, our Careers Lead, has organised our Year 11 Careers Day on the 16 October to help inform those all-important decisions that our Year 11 students will need to make in the coming months. Please support your Year 11 child by speaking with them about their college and course choices, and whether they will fit in with their career or university aspirations. A Year 11 report will be released at the end of this term, including 'attitude to learning' and predicted grades, to help guide choices and areas of focus for the remainder of Year 11.

We also have a set of mock GCSEs in November in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science, to allow us to identify any gaps in learning, followed by a full round of mock exams in the spring of 2025.

We are also holding our Year 11 Core Revision evening on the 17 October organised by Mrs Mathew, Deputy Headteacher. If you are a Year 11 parent or carer, please come along to support your child. Research suggests that parental involvement, support and encouragement positively impacts a child's GCSE outcomes. The content of this evening will give you the tools you need to support your child's revision, and the knowledge needed to discuss this with them throughout the remainder of the year. Revision and the periodic revisiting of previously learned curriculum content — referred to as interleaving in school—are proven by cognitive science studies to strengthen long-term memory. If students can keep curriculum content in their long-term memory, then they can retrieve

this when needed in exams. We look forward to seeing many of our Year 11 families at this event in October.

Mrs Mathew asked teachers to report back to her on how Year 11 specifically has settled back into their learning after the summer, and we have had some very positive feedback from teachers regarding a positive attitude. Well done Year 11 students!

Open Evening

You may have been aware that earlier in September we hosted our annual Open Evening for prospective students and parents who are choosing their secondary school. I'd like to thank all students involved in helping us out on the evening, working with curriculum areas, touring visitors and performing on the evening. Special thanks to three of our new Year 7 students—Lexie, Matthew, and Drew—who were incredibly brave and articulate when speaking to families in the hall about their first few weeks at Ratton School.

A further thank you to Matilda and Matthias, our Year 11 Head Students, for sharing their valuable experience from their time at Ratton. Tremendous thanks to our performers and the Performing Arts team for giving us an uplifting preview of our upcoming show, *A Night at the Musicals*, set for January 2025. As always, it will be held at the Royal Hippodrome Theatre—tickets are available now!

International Day of Languages

The last week of September saw us celebrating International Day of Languages and welcoming a group of German students. It was wonderful to see our students touring the school with our German guests, who accompanied them to lessons. Thanks to the languages team for organising, and a special thank you to Ms Webster for being the driving force behind this initiative. Ratton School continues to do its part for positive Anglo-European relations!

Sporting Success

- Ted W in #TeamYear11 for being selected to play for U17's Harlequins Rugby team, a fantastic achievement and we look forward to hearing of his progress this academic year.
- Lana P in #TeamYear7 who has had a successful year training for a triathlon. After competing in the South East junior series, Lana came second. Wha a great achievement, well done.
- Well done to the #TeamYear10 boys football team, who secured a win against TEA school at their first fixture of the season. An amazing score of 5-2, well done.
- A big well done to our #TeamYear7 girls football team, who worked really well together in their first match of the season. Our newly established girls team for Year 7 did themselves proud, keep up the hard work and we look forward to hearing how you grown and develop as a team over the course of this year.
- Well done to Fin L-F (#TeamYear10), Katy B (#TeamYear11) and Alicia S (#TeamYear9) for their recent cross-country efforts, representing their team Eastbourne Rovers. All achieved some fantastic individual results, as well as securing solid places for their team. Keep up the great work.
- Staff shout-outs to Mr De Oliveira, Mr Potten and Mr Pullinger for completing the London Vitality race, great job. Keep up the great work. Also, to those staff across #SouthDownsLearningTrust taking part in this year's Beachy Head Marathon events in support of our #CharityChampions at Children With Cancer Fund. Lots of Ratton staff have been training hard in preparation for the event this October, good job.
- A very big well done goes to Gaby S in #TeamYear10 for her continued efforts in youth professional football, undertaking recent tours for both England's U16s team and Chelsea's

U15s team. She has a further tour coming up and we look forward to hearing how she gets on. Good job Gabby!

- A final shout-out – although not a sporting achievement – goes to Millie S in #TeamYear8 who, amazingly, has got through the second round of auditions for ITV's Britain's Got Talent show, with results for final Live shows to be released in January. We hear that Millie had a fantastic lot of auditions with her incredible singing voice, and we are all really proud of her. Well done.

Attendance

Mr Hunt has taken on the role of Senior Attendance Champion at Ratton this year, in line with new Department for Education guidance which asks schools to name a senior member of staff to do so. Mr Hunt has spoken to students on the theme of 'Moments Matter' and the fact that students who are absent from school miss out on so much more than their academic work. Ratton provides some excellent extracurricular and social experiences for all our young people and missing school means missing important social and emotional development too.

At the beginning of the year, I'd like to highlight the importance of good or better attendance of your child at school. To illustrate my point, I'd like to use some data generated regarding attendance and our GCSE results earlier this Summer. Students in Year 11 whose attendance was above 95% achieved almost a grade higher than target on average. Attendance between 90.1% and 95% gained just over a half a grade higher than target on average, but attendance below 80% meant that GCSE grades gained on average were up to 1.5 grades below target. The evidence really does prove that good attendance means good GCSE outcomes. 90% attendance may sound like a good figure, but this means absence from school 1 day in every fortnightly timetable rotation. This means potentially up to 100 lessons a year!

Staying with attendance, I would respectfully and politely remind all parents and carers that holidays are not permitted in term time. Government guidance states that we are no longer able to authorise any requests for children to be taken out of school unless there are exceptional circumstances (and family holidays/trips do not fall into this category). I know it is difficult when holiday prices rise during school holidays, and with the current pressures with the cost of living rising, but it is our statutory (legal) duty to follow this guidance.

If your child takes an absence or holiday during term time, it will be recorded as unauthorised. We may also request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to each parent or carer for each child absent during this period.

Reminders around communication

For new parents and carers, and a polite reminder for existing families, some information and tips regarding talking about any concerns you have about your child at school are below.

It is helpful if you can:

- Check Edulink regularly for messages from teachers, view homework set for your child and any updates around reward or behaviour points – 'how to' guides can be found on our website here: [EduLink One | Ratton School](#)
- Keep in touch regularly with your child's tutor or year leadership team. Raise any concerns with them. Your relationship with your child's tutor and their year leadership team is important.
- Reassure your child that you will speak with the school. Talk to the school first. Then you can advise your child with a complete picture of what happened.

- Ask for an appointment to talk to teachers. It is not always possible for school staff to meet parents immediately. If it is helpful, they may invite a senior teacher or other key staff, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO).
- Give staff a chance to respond to messages about concerns before taking further action. Depending on the nature of the concern or incident, we may need a few days to respond after investigating and gathering information.

Staff will aim to respond to emails between 8am and 5pm and within 48 hours if your question is not urgent.

School Events

Next week, Ms Bryden will be delivering assemblies on well-being to students to help them manage their mental and physical health as we get deeper into the autumn term. Year 11 will also be receiving assemblies on the week beginning Monday 7 October on post-16 options. Representatives from local colleges will be visiting to speak about the options available to them. Regarding careers, some of our Year 9 students will be attending a National Space Academy talk at Herstmonceux in October. For our Year 10 families an important date for the diary is Thursday 3rd October when we hold our Year 10 Success Evening – details to follow – as we outline how you can help your child in Year 10 make a successful start to their GCSE courses.

Thank you for reading, and as ever, don't hesitate to get in touch with us should you need to. Educating a child is a partnership between school and home, and we want to work with you to support your child in achieving success together.

Best wishes,



Mr Peevers
Headteacher

