

Headteacher's Bulletin

January 2026 Publication

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to the January edition of the monthly bulletin. I hope you have had a good start to 2026.

This month at Ratton School

Term 3 started with our usual INSET Day after Christmas. During this day, staff worked on a range of initiatives to further develop our practice at Ratton School. A part of the day was spent on our practice around literacy and how we can support our learners to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills. The training ties into the work we have been focusing on, including written literacy and challenge across the curriculum. We are seeing the quality and quantity of student talk in lessons increasing. As parents and carers, please do continue to encourage your child to engage in conversation about their school day and what they are learning in lessons to help us develop these all-important skills.

We also spent time looking at how we manage behaviour and attendance at school. I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate students on their excellent behaviour in lessons so far this term. It has been great to visit lessons and observe students engaged in their learning and behaving well.

Year 11 will start their full suite of mock GCSE exams this week. Exams will last for the two-week period, and I know there has been separate communication to Year 11 families regarding arrangements. We have been impressed with the number of Year 11 students attending intervention and tutoring sessions at all levels over the last few months to prepare for their exams.

We will be using the results to hone our approach over the next 4 months prior to the real GCSEs and focusing on the areas for development that the mock results suggest. We are really pleased with how Year 11 is working with us – I've visited several Year 11 lessons this term and have been impressed with their effort and work. If you are a parent or carer of a Year 11 student, you can look at revision resources and hints and tips on the Ratton School website here: [Revision| Ratton](#) Please do have that ongoing conversation around revision – students need to be doing this now! Year 11 parents and carers will be able to come into school for a second consultation evening post mock on the 26th of February following the mock results.

Year 11 students also experienced mock interviews this week from local employers and community organizations to help them develop all-important interview skills for college, university, and employment. The feedback from employers and visitors was brilliant – they were so complimentary of our students' mature and engaged approach to this opportunity. We've had some great feedback from the employers who have visited.

Whole school production: 'The Addams Family – School Edition'

I am absolutely delighted to share with you all the tremendous success of our recent school production of *The Addams Family* at The Royal Hippodrome Theatre, Eastbourne. This was truly a spectacular achievement that showcased the very best of what our students and staff can accomplish when they work together – the Ratton virtue of teamwork in action!

The standard of performance was exceptional. Our students delivered acting of remarkable maturity and depth, bringing these iconic characters to life with energy, humor and genuine emotion. The singing was outstanding – from powerful ensemble numbers to tender solo moments; our performers

demonstrated vocal talent that would grace any professional stage. The choreography was equally impressive, with complex routines executed with precision, flair, and infectious enthusiasm that had the audience captivated from start to finish.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our local community sponsors, whose contributions enabled us to stage this production in such a prestigious venue. Their belief in our young people and commitment to the arts in education has made a real difference, and we are enormously grateful for their partnership. These sponsors include: **Ceramic Tiling Associates #CTA** (webpage: [CTA](#)), **GM Monk Ltd** (webpage: [G M Monk Ltd](#)) and **The Rotary Club** of Eastbourne ([Rotary Club](#)).

*[Please see our social media platforms for more details on these partnerships or the **South Downs Learning Trust** website (www.sdlit.org.uk). Our social media posts also display post production professional photographs courtesy of **Ian Down Photography** [iandownphotography.com] – thank you! We also thank Ashton Storey, alumni/previous student, for his brilliant videography skills - we are thrilled that he continues to support us here at Ratton!].*

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Performing Arts team who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Most importantly, **congratulations** to every single student involved – you have created memories that will last a lifetime and set a new benchmark for excellence and our virtue of creativity at Ratton School.

Sports News

- • A huge well done to our **#TeamYear10 girls' basketball squad**, who were crowned **Tournament Champions** at the recent #3v3 event hosted by Eastbourne Academy!
- • Similarly, another fantastic result from our **#TeamYear10 boys' basketball squad**, finishing an impressive **3rd place** overall after a series of strong wins. Both teams represented #TeamRatton with pride, unity, and ambition. Well done to them both.
- • A huge well done to our **#TeamYear7 girls' and boys' basketball squads**, who both secured well-deserved **3rd place finishes** at the School Partnership #3v3 Competition! Each team impressed with strong wins and just two losses throughout the afternoon.
 - A huge shout-out and well done to **Fin L-F in #TeamYear11** for securing Gold at the Sussex Schools Cross Country Championships — a dominant, outstanding performance at county level. Incredible achievement!
 - Congratulations also to **Oscar and Seth P in #TeamYear10** for their strong runs and great representation.
 - A special well done to **Lana P in #TeamYear8**, who achieved a fantastic **Silver** medal, competing bravely against both Year 8 and Year 9 athletes. Brilliant results from all four students — we are very proud of you!
- • A big shout-out to our **#TeamYear7 athletes** for their brilliant efforts at the **SSSCA Indoor Athletics Competition**, held at Willingdon Community School. Against 10 other schools, our students showed grit, determination and true Ratton spirit. The girls' squad finished **6th** and the boys' squad **7th**, with every athlete giving maximum effort across relays, throws and jumps. Outstanding teamwork and resilience throughout — well done to all team members.
 - A huge well done to our **#TeamYear8 and #TeamYear9 Sports Leaders**, who delivered an inspiring morning of trampoline enrichment for three classes of #TeamYear2 pupils from Motcombe School. Staff praised the leaders' professionalism, encouragement, and technical

ability. The Motcombe pupils finished each session proudly showcasing a routine and left with huge smiles thanks to Ratton's supportive leadership atmosphere. Well done.

Reminders around communication for the new year

For 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:

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. If it is helpful, they may invite a senior teacher or other key staff, such as the special educational needs coordinator (SENDCO).

It is not always possible for school staff to meet parents immediately – please do not expect staff to be able to do so as senior and pastoral staff are likely to already have meetings booked in for the day with parents and carers, or external visitors and agencies, as well as teaching commitments. We will always be happy to book a meeting, if necessary, at earliest mutual convenience.

Give staff a chance to respond to messages about concerns before taking further action. Depending on the nature of the concern or incident, schools may need a few days to respond after investigating and gathering information.

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

School Safety at the beginning and end of the day

We are seeing an increase in parents and carers parking on the yellow zig zag lines outside of school, particularly in the morning, to drop their children off to school. I know sometimes that Park Avenue is often very busy at peak times and sometimes the traffic is at a standstill whilst children are dropped off in front of school. However, we are seeing cars stop when this is not the case on the zig zag lines when the traffic is not busy. The lines are there to ensure safety and avoid any potential road accidents involving our children, residents, and staff on duty. Please can I ask that you avoid doing so; the traffic enforcement team from Eastbourne Borough Council will be visiting periodically to support. We all need to work together to ensure the beginning and end of the school day is as safe as possible for our children.

I have been contacted by residents who are concerned about the level of traffic and safety for them, their families and Ratton students. They have also been in contact with Josh Babarinde MP, Eastbourne's member of parliament, and I will be hosting a meeting at school later in February with Josh and residents to discuss our concerns and look at potential traffic calming measures we can introduce. I will keep you posted on these developments.

Additionally, on this note and to minimise traffic on the school site, please can I request that you do not use the car park at the front of school to pick up or drop off students unless your child has a medical or mobility need. Thank you to all parents and carers for your support in keeping the school site safe for all at the beginning and end of the day.

Attendance

I wanted to take this opportunity to talk about something that is fundamental to our students' success – school attendance.

Whilst our current attendance figures remain in line with the national average for secondary schools, I must be honest with you that our whole school attendance has declined compared to last year. This is a concern because we know that every day a student misses school is a day of learning lost, and these absences can quickly add up to significant gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Good attendance is essential for building close and productive relationships between school and home, and for ensuring our students achieve their full potential.

Regular attendance helps students to:

- Keep up with their learning and avoid falling behind
- Maintain friendships, belonging and feel part of our school community
- Develop the habits and routines that will serve them well in further education and employment
- Access the full range of opportunities and experiences we offer at Ratton School

We are committed to working closely with families to understand and address any barriers to attendance, and we will always meet families where they're at, without judgement, using empathetic language and working in partnership to find solutions.

How you can help:

- Ensure your child attends school every day unless they are genuinely too unwell to do so
- Contact us on the first day of any absence to explain the reason
- Arrange medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible
- Talk to us early if your child is anxious about attending school or facing any difficulties
- Support our high expectations around punctuality – arriving on time helps students settle quickly into learning

If you have any concerns about your child's attendance or need support, please don't hesitate to contact our attendance team led by Mrs. Papagna, Assistant Headteacher. Together, we can ensure that every student at Ratton School has the best possible chance to succeed.

DfE Guidance on Mobile Phones in schools

I wanted to update you on our approach to mobile phones at school, particularly considering the DfE's recent revised guidance on mobile phones in schools, which now expects schools to be mobile phone-free "by default". [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)

As you know, we currently operate a 'no hear, no see' policy at Ratton School, where students are permitted to bring mobile phones to school but must keep them switched off and out of sight throughout the entire school day, including breaktimes and lunchtimes. This policy has served us well in maintaining a focus on learning and positive behaviour in lessons.

However, we recognise that there may be more effective ways to support our students in managing their phone use whilst at school. Following parental and staff surveys, as well as valuable input from

our student voice, we are currently exploring additional solutions that align with the DfE's guidance. One option we are carefully considering is the introduction of secure phone pouches, which would allow students to keep their phones with them but locked away and inaccessible during the school day.

We want to ensure that any changes we make are in the best interests of our students' wellbeing, learning and safety, whilst also being practical for our school community. We will keep you informed as our review progresses and will share our plans with you before implementing any changes to our current policy.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us create the best possible learning environment for all our students.

Upcoming Events

Term 3 ends on Friday, February 13th and term 4 starts on Monday, February 23rd. Good luck to all students and staff taking part in the ski trip over the half-term holiday; I hope all involved have an enjoyable and enriching experience.

Just a reminder that our free to all students' breakfast club for students continues to operate before school in Refresh every morning – the gates are open from 8.10am onwards for students to access this. It is always great to see students and staff starting the day in such a lovely way together.

Best wishes,



Mr. Peevers
Headteacher

