



25th September 2026

Dear SNHS Families

As we reach the end of another busy but productive week at Sturminster Newton High School, I would like to thank everyone who continues to contribute to the life of our school. This week has once again been a wonderful example of our school vision, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child", with students, staff, families and our wider community all playing their part in supporting our young people.

What Has Happened at SNHS This Week

More Clubs, More Opportunities

There are even more opportunities for students to get involved beyond the classroom. Our popular Crochet Club has now been rebranded as Textiles Club, allowing students to explore a wider range of creative activities and skills. We have also launched a brand-new Pokémon Club, which has already generated plenty of excitement amongst students. Both clubs are led by Ms Cammidge in the Creative Arts Department.

Meanwhile, our lunchtime Chess Club continues to grow and now includes a new Chess Ladder Competition. Open to students from all year groups, the competition gives players the chance to challenge one another and climb the rankings. Students interested in taking part should speak to Ms Fitzgerald in the Library.

With so many clubs on, including plenty of revision sessions, there really is something for everyone.

Open Evening 2026: Our Biggest and Best Yet

On Thursday evening we were delighted to welcome over 300 visitors from more than 17 primary schools to our annual Open Evening.

The event was a tremendous success and showcased everything that makes SNHS special. Visitors explored departments across the school, completed their Open Evening Passports, searched for our Golden Tickets and experienced first-hand the breadth of opportunities available to students at SNHS.

Thank you to all staff for the enormous amount of preparation that went into the evening. The school looked fantastic, and the enthusiasm, professionalism and pride shown by staff was evident throughout.

A special mention must go to our student volunteers, who were exceptional ambassadors for the school. Whether leading tours, supporting departments or speaking to prospective families, they represented SNHS brilliantly and received many compliments from visitors.

We would also like to thank the parents and carers who attended, and those who supported their children in volunteering on the evening. Events like this are only possible when the whole community comes together and are a wonderful example of our Village vision.

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The growing number of families choosing to visit SNHS, especially many out of catchment, reflects the positive journey our school continues to be on, and everyone who contributed to the evening should feel incredibly proud of its success.

Sixth Form Visit to the Amazing Apprenticeships Show

On Wednesday, our Sixth Form students travelled to Bristol to attend the amazing Apprenticeships Show. The event provided students with a fantastic opportunity to explore apprenticeship pathways, meet employers and gain a better understanding of the many routes available to them after Sixth Form. Our students engaged exceptionally well throughout the day, asking thoughtful questions and making the most of the opportunities available to them.

Welcoming Rev Andrew Gubbins

This week we were delighted to launch our new chaplaincy partnership with Rev Andrew Gubbins, who will be spending time in school with students every Tuesday lunchtime.

Rev Gubbins provides another trusted adult for students to talk with, seek guidance from and simply spend time chatting to. This partnership reflects both our values and our belief that supporting young people requires a whole-community approach.

We are delighted to welcome him to SNHS and encourage students to say hello when they see him around school. He will be walking around the school site at lunch and is available for anyone to talk to if they wish.

Read to Succeed

Our Read to Succeed programme continues to form an important part of tutor time across the school. It involves the teacher or staff member leading the reading of a book, with students tracking and following using their new read to succeed bookmarks. There are then opportunities to discuss themes, context and characters as a class together, with resources provided to help bring the book to life and help students develop important context and inference skills.

Having visited several sessions this week, it has been a genuine pleasure to see students and staff reading together, discussing texts and exploring ideas. Reading remains one of our key school priorities, helping students to develop vocabulary, confidence and the wider literacy skills that underpin success across all subjects.

A Culture of Continuous Improvement

Some students may have noticed groups of staff meeting together every Wednesday morning in a classroom and wondered what these sessions are for. Several students have asked me if the 'teachers are having their own lessons?'. Well, the answer to this is definitely yes, as we are all encouraged to be learners at SNHS and staff development is a key part of what we do.

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Every Wednesday morning staff join for our weekly Kaizen Briefing, where staff come together for ongoing professional development and training. These sessions are often led by staff, for staff, and focus on making small but continuous improvements that strengthen teaching and learning across the school.

This week's focus was on reading and our Read to Succeed programme. Every member of staff takes part in regular training and development as part of our commitment to providing the best possible education for our students.

What's Coming Up at SNHS Next Week

Year 7 PGL Residential

Next week our Year 7 students head off to PGL Osmington Bay for what promises to be an exciting and memorable three-day residential.

Students will take part in a range of adventurous activities, including high ropes and team-building challenges, while having the opportunity to build confidence, develop resilience and strengthen friendships outside the classroom.

We hope all students have a fantastic experience and would like to thank the staff who are giving up their time to make this opportunity possible.

School Improvement Partner Visit

On Friday we are pleased to welcome our School Improvement Partner back to SNHS.

These visits provide valuable challenge, support and accountability as we continue our journey of school improvement and ensure we are providing the very best experience possible for all students.

Mock Interview Days

Next week, our Year 10 and Year 11 students will take part in our annual Mock Interview Days, an important part of our preparation programme for life beyond school.

These events give students the opportunity to experience a realistic interview with professionals and members of our local community, helping them develop vital employability and communication skills. Students will practise presenting themselves professionally, discussing their strengths and aspirations, and responding confidently to interview questions in a supportive environment.

The experience is often a real confidence booster and provides valuable preparation for future college, apprenticeship, Sixth Form and employment interviews. It is also a fantastic example of our wider community working together to support young people as they prepare for the next stage of their journey.

We are incredibly grateful to the volunteers who have generously given their time to support these events and help our students develop the confidence, resilience and skills needed for future success.

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Attendance Matters

Attendance remains one of the most important factors in ensuring success at school. Every lesson counts, and regular attendance gives students the very best chance of achieving their potential.

We are pleased to see improvements in attendance across several year groups this week:

- **Year 7:** 95.8% ▲ A slight improvement on last week.
- **Year 8:** 95.5% ▲ An excellent improvement of almost 2%.
- **Year 9:** 91.7% ▲ Nearly a 1% improvement on last week.

Particular congratulations to our Year 7 and Year 8 students, whose attendance remains very strong. Well done to Year 9 for improving on last week.

There are, however, areas where we need to improve:

- **Year 10:** 91.9% ▼ A decrease from last week. This is a vital GCSE year, and every lesson missed can create gaps in learning that become increasingly difficult to fill as courses progress.
- **Year 11:** 88.4% ▼ A decrease from last week. Year 11 is a crucial year as students work towards their GCSE examinations. Strong attendance now has a direct impact on confidence, progress and future outcomes. We need every Year 11 to be in school to maximise their learning.

Thank you to all parents and carers for your continued support in ensuring students attend school regularly and arrive ready to learn.

In closing, this week has showcased so much of what makes SNHS special: fantastic enrichment opportunities, a hugely successful Open Evening, growing partnerships within our community and students who continue to represent the school with pride.

I hope everyone has a restful and enjoyable weekend, and we look forward to welcoming students back on Monday for another exciting week at SNHS.

With very best wishes

Mr M Motteram
Headteacher

