

25 January, 2007

Dear Parents/ Carers

I have two reasons for writing to you between our regular editions of Tiger News.

Firstly, you may be aware that there are plans to install traffic signals at the junction of Station Road and Pullman Road. This will involve removing the mini-roundabout which is at the exit of our service road. The purpose of this development is to reduce congestion and to improve road safety. As you will know, we have been extremely concerned about road safety in the proximity of the College and so I welcome any potential improvement.

We have now been informed that work will commence in early February and will last about eleven weeks. Temporary traffic lights will be in place while work is in progress, and we can anticipate delays. Note also that while work is ongoing, Pullman Road will be one-way (in the direction away from the College).

However, to minimise disruption, during each school day work will begin after the start of the school day – finishing before the end of the school day. Work will go on through weekends and school holidays.

I ask that parents do not drive their children to the College unless strictly necessary. When possible, students should walk or use bicycles for health reasons. In any event, the use of cars should be kept to the minimum while the road works are in operation.

Secondly, I wish to address the issue of mobile phones and MP3 players. These items have increasingly been a problem in all schools, but I suspect that this applies especially with the 14-16 age group. We have well over 1000 students in Years 10 and 11 and I imagine that the great majority of them possess phones (and in very many cases MP3 players).

In these circumstances, it would be virtually impossible to police a ban on these gadgets. However, we do insist that the phones are not used at all in College. It should go without saying that MP3 players are not to be used in class. Students often tell us that their phones are missing/ have been taken. Staff are here for teaching and learning, and of course will deal with behavioural issues. However, if students did not bring phones and MP3 players into College, issues of loss/ theft would not arise. We cannot take any responsibility for any replacement, and I would advise parents to check their home insurance in this respect.

The improper use of these items seems to have increased this term, which is why I draw it to your attention now. It may be that many students have been given new gadgets for Christmas and are making use of them in College.

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We have had examples of students sending text messages in class, trying to hide their phones beneath their tables. We have had examples of students walking into their classes wearing earphones, listening to music. They have had to be challenged by their teachers to put their MP3 players away. Perhaps more worryingly, on occasion students have taken photos or videos of other students or of staff, using these inappropriately and without permission.

My colleagues at other schools have described similar difficulties. Mobile phones and MP3 players will not go away, but we really must do all we can to minimise the problem and to allow teachers to get on with their jobs – teaching students and maximising their learning.

I must stress that most students are perfectly well behaved and would not dream of using phones/ MP3 players as described. I refer to a minority, but it is still a significant number of students. When challenged, those students frequently view misuse as a very minor offence.

In the coming weeks, we will be focusing on this matter, taking action as appropriate. I ask that you stress to your son or daughter that they must follow the College's rules in this respect. I welcome your support as we do all we can in partnership to ensure that students make the most of their time at Guthlaxton, using lesson times for learning without the distractions I have highlighted here.

Yours sincerely

MJ Fields

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PRINCIPAL

Copies: Governors
 Sports and other weekend users of Guthlaxton's facilities
 All staff