



Newsletter

Autumn Term 2022

Purpose

The Newsletter is designed to provide students and parents with information about recent developments at the College, to highlight forthcoming activities and events, and to provide guidance on a number of important College-related matters. A further edition will be published in the first half of 2023 – and email updates will be given where appropriate. The College website is also an important ongoing source of information: www.colchsfc.ac.uk. More specifically, the 'Documents' section of the website has a range of very useful materials. Term Dates for this academic year, and also for 2023/24, can be found on the website. The 'News' section of the website <http://www.colchsfc.ac.uk/news/> provides regular magazine-style reports and photographs from some of our student activities. Students and parents may also find visiting the College Instagram site (search **colchsfc**) a useful and interesting way to keep updated with regard to College activities.

Non-student day

A reminder that tomorrow (Wednesday 7 December) is a non-student day (a staff training day). Students will not be required to attend the College on this day, although the Library and all independent study facilities will be available for any students who would like to study on the College site.

Advanced notice – scheduled potential train strikes

The rail union RMT has indicated that they currently plan to take further strike actions – and this includes within the Greater Anglia region. Greater Anglia will publish travel advice regarding the strike days, which can be found on their website: www.greateranglia.co.uk/strikes. In general, the rail operators' advice is to avoid travelling by train on strike days – but when RMT organised strike action in the summer period a low-level of the service was provided on the mainline (but branch lines did not operate). Some students may be able to make alternative transport arrangements and, in some instances, students living outside of Colchester may be able to make arrangements to stay overnight with a family member or friend living in Colchester.

The scheduled strike periods within term time are:

- Tuesday 13 - Wednesday 14 December
- Friday 16 - Saturday 17 December
- Tuesday 3 - Wednesday 4 January (first day of the Spring Term is 4 January)
- Friday 6 - Saturday 7 January

Greater Anglia have indicated that monthly or Season Ticket holders may be able to claim a refund via the 'Delay Repay' scheme – details on the Greater Anglia website.

Communications and student support

The Student and Parent Handbooks can be found on the College website under: [Key Documents](#)

Students have ongoing access to important internal communications and a large range of teaching and learning materials through our 'Moodle' virtual learning environment and communication facility. Students are expected to check Moodle, and also their College email, at least twice a day as our College systems rely very heavily on these electronic forms of communication. Please also note that in the event of an emergency or in instances when there are potentially severe winter weather conditions, any information and guidance will normally be posted on Moodle – and the information will also be posted on the website for parents.

The safety and wellbeing of our students is always a primary concern. Details of our Child Protection Policy and other policy documents, including the College Prevent strategy, are available from the Documents section of the website - and are also within the Parents section of the website.

Our pastoral team of Assistant Principals, Senior Tutors and Personal Tutors are supported by a Student Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, together with a Wellbeing Hub, and external mental health support team and a team of trained first aiders who are available to also help provide an initial level of support to our students when necessary. If a student needs to be sent home, then we would normally expect a responsible adult to collect them from College. Where this is not possible, we will normally arrange a taxi to take the student home, but you may be liable for the cost. It is essential that parent/carer contact details (appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses please) are kept up to date so that we can, where appropriate, contact home in the event of an accident or illness, during the College day.

Last Summer Term we also undertook a review of our onsite safety and security arrangements at the College. We took into account student feedback received and we also asked for suggestions from a specialist group drawn from other Colleges within our peer support group, who visited and met with some students and appropriate staff. To achieve high levels of safety and security it is clearly felt to be important for safeguarding our community that personnel are easily identifiable - and that it is clear if and when there are unauthorised visitors onsite. As a result, from early November, we made some changes to our student ID card arrangements and requirements – and student ID should now always be clearly visible whenever students are onsite, whether in the buildings on within the estate. To enable this, students were issued with lanyards to use for their ID cards (a lanyard system has been in place for staff and visitors for a number of years). Students should now be wearing their lanyards at all times when on-site. In a very small number of instances, where students cannot wear a lanyard, they will be provided with a clip fastening. For those who forget their lanyard, a back-up temporary daily sticker arrangement is in place - from the General Office. There is also a system for replacement if ID or the lanyard is lost – students should ask at Reception or the Library. Of course, these requirements are fairly normal - most medium and large sized organisations across the country have systems in place to enable easy identification of authorised personnel. The new arrangement was initially gradually phased in during November but is now fully in place. It is already working well. The vast majority of our students have adopted the new arrangements very quickly and easily – and we thank them for their support in helping ensure that all within our community are protected. We do however ask that the small number of forgetful students now concentrate very hard to ensure that they consistently meet the new requirements.

If parents/carers are not available for 'emergency contact', for example, during their son or daughter's participation in a residential College trip or visit, and/or where parents are out of the country on holiday or business, it is important that clear arrangements are made for a nominated local based responsible adult contact who can assume 'duty of care' for their son or daughter. The College needs to be made fully aware of the detail of this arrangement prior to the relevant trip taking place. Students wishing to participate in any College trips and visits must ensure that all health difficulties, physical and/or mental, are declared to the trip organisers on the application form relating to the trip. In some instances, risk assessments will need to be undertaken.

Students provided the College with their parents'/carers' current email addresses in late August. We use these contact details for most key communications to parents/carers from the College. It is, therefore, important during the academic year that the College is informed if there are changes to parental email addresses. Please email Fiona Weston – papincipal@colchsfc.ac.uk with the detail of any changes as and when they arise.

If you have a concern about your son or daughter's wellbeing, please contact their Personal or Senior Tutor and, if appropriate, Jo Cadman, Assistant Principal with responsibility for student matters. Please do contact me if you feel this appropriate.

2022 examination results and destinations

The results achieved by our students in the summer of 2022 were excellent - and above the national benchmark and College 2019 (pre covid period) levels. This was a great achievement, particularly in the context that when students worked through so much disruption caused by the covid pandemic.

As a result of strong results and academic achievements, student progression has been excellent. Over 1000 of last year's Year 2 students are now studying for degree courses at universities or specialist visual arts, design or performing arts courses, or have arranged 'GAP' or other 'Year Out' placements and experiences – with most having places to enter higher education in 2023. Others have obtained employment and training opportunities in London or in the local area or abroad.

Congratulations must be offered to our students for their hard work and successes last academic year, and credit must also go to the College staff who supported students in their studies and wider experiences in exceptional and demanding circumstances. The achievement of last year's second year students will be recognised at the Annual Reunion and Awards event to be held at Charter Hall on the evening of Monday 19 December.

Our current Year 2 students also achieved encouraging results in their May Internal Assessments. Their progress provides a sound basis upon which they can build on for success at A and AG level, and in other qualifications next summer. Solid preparation for the forthcoming Mock Exams and the External Exams and Assessments in January is clearly important. With regards to GCSE, where the majority of students involved were repeating examinations to improve grades from Year 11, 2022 results were also excellent and GCSE English and Maths resit results were really outstanding – considerably higher than national averages.

Year 2 students

We anticipate that around 1000 of our Year 2 students will apply for higher education courses - either for 2023 entry or, on a deferred basis, for 2024 entry. Many students have already submitted their UCAS applications and staff are currently very busy advising and working with our other students to help them prepare and finalise their UCAS applications. The specified deadline for the receipt of applications for most degree courses at UCAS is 25 January 2023 although for some specific degree courses deadlines dates were substantially earlier than this. (Relevant dates have been clearly and regularly communicated within College). Please note that from the first submission of a draft UCAS application from a student to their Personal Tutor, there is a very significant amount of checking, administrative work, and reference preparation by a range of relevant staff that needs to be undertaken. We therefore urge that any remaining draft applications are completed and submitted to College staff ASAP as our internal deadline has now passed.

Once they have received offers from universities, students will have several weeks to decide on their 'firm' and insurance offers. They should not rush this decision and they are welcome to seek advice from their Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor or Careers.

Students considering applying for competitive employment or sponsorship or training scheme options offered by many of the national and multi-national organisations commencing in Summer/Autumn 2023 will, in most instances, also need to make early applications – and a good number will have needed to be submitted in the pre-Christmas period. Year 2 students exploring employment and training options have been strongly advised to undertake their research regarding their progression options as a matter of urgency to avoid the risk of missing deadlines.

All Year 2 A level students will be involved in a programme of Mock Exams and Assessments between 5 January and 11 January 2023. Following the marking and grading of the Exam papers and Assessments, Reports will be published on 22 February and a Year 2 Parents' Consultant Evening will be held on Thursday 23 February 2023.

Year 1 students

We have been very pleased to welcome our newly enrolled students this term - and the vast majority have settled very quickly into their individual programmes of study and courses and to the College in general. We feel it important to highlight to parents and students some important Spring/Summer 2023 arrangements.

Between 5 and 11 January, during the Year 2 A level mock exam period, there will be changes to the College timetable affecting all students. Students have been briefed.

Please note that the Easter break in April 2023 is not long before the start of the May Internal Exams and Assessments Programme for A level courses. Following these Internal Exams and Assessments, in June students will receive revised Current and Target grades reflecting their progress on their academic programme of study. Students should therefore plan to make substantial progress with their independent programmes of revision and preparation for the May exams during the Easter period – and it is therefore not a good time for Year 1 students to take substantive holidays. Some Year 1 students will also have some Exams in May or early June.

The revised target grades that follow the A level May Internal Exams and Assessments process will help 'inform' the Predicted Grades process subsequently used for university applications completed in the early autumn period.

Consistent attendance through to the end of the Summer Term, on Tuesday 18 July 2023, is essential for Year 1 students to be able to progress to study a second year programme in September 2023 and in a context of the very strong link between levels of student development and achievement we remind students and parents that holidays should not be taken by students at any stage within term time including within the second half of the Summer Term.

Year 1 A level students should be aware that in July some work will be set by staff in each subject area for completion during the summer holiday period and many A level students will be continuing their Extended Project Qualification work.

Summer 2023 results and post results arrangements

We have been informed that Summer 2023 A level results will be released on Thursday 17 August 2023 - and GCSE results released on Thursday 24 August 2023. Results will be released electronically via individual student Moodle accounts. A large team of Senior and Careers Department staff will be in College from 17 August to help students and parents to offer guidance and advice. Enrolment will begin with new students starting on Tuesday 29 August 2023.

All students - Progression

A substantive College programme of Higher Education and Employment progression information and guidance operates through the academic year ([Key Dates and Activities for Student Progression](#)). Year 2 students have been encouraged to make firm progression plans for the end of the academic year – including by researching employment and apprenticeship and completing their UCAS applications. All students should have completed an Employability Skills audit.

Our Winter Careers Fair will be held in the Multi-Purpose Hall on Wednesday 8 February 2023 - with approximately 130 exhibitors invited and expected to attend - including representatives from over 80 universities, employers, apprenticeship and training providers and 'Year Out' providers. In the June/July period a second Careers Fair will also be organised for Year 1 students – and this was very successful last year. Please see our Careers website <http://www.colchsfc.ac.uk/departments/careers/> for further details. There will also be a Higher Education and Employability Briefing Evening for parents of Year 1 students in the spring (details TBC).

In addition, in June, all Year 1 students will be participating in a College-wide Career Progression Programme where over 300 talks will be taking place to assist students in planning their next steps. Students and parents may also wish to attend a regional UCAS Higher Education Exhibition which we understand will be held at the University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park (details TBC). Students will need to sign up to attend the event via UCAS website.

On an ongoing basis all students are able to book individual careers appointments via the Careers Department.

Learning Support detail – Exam Access Arrangements

Drop-in support

There is drop in support available in every teaching block in No.58 North Hill (the pink building behind the Cock and Pye). This is open to all students, where they can work in a quiet environment. Staff may be on hand to answer questions, however for support around organisation, time management, essay writing, revision techniques or anything else they are struggling with, students can book a session with an LSA. To book a session, please email Alison Day: daya@colchsfc.ac.uk

Exam Access Arrangements

Students have been reminded to check that their individual Learning Support detail, including any possible Examination Access Arrangements, are accurately logged on the College Database. They can check their details by looking that their 'home' page on Moodle and clicking on 'Exam Details and Seating Arrangements' (in the top right-hand corner). If any of the details are incorrect or missing, students have been asked to inform the Learning Support team (learningsupport@colchsfc.ac.uk) or their Personal Tutor as soon as possible especially if they had an arrangement at school so we can contact schools regarding this. This information needs to be accurate as the College has to officially apply to the examination authorities for Access Arrangements. The deadline for us to apply for arrangements for Summer 2023 examinations is mid-March. Failure to meet this deadline will mean that the College is unable to apply for Exam Access Arrangements.

Recent Progress Reviews / Year 1 Parent Consultation Evenings / Reports

Full Progress Reviews with subject teachers took place in early November, where Current and Target grades were given in each subject/course, which culminated in an overall individual student progress discussion with their Personal Tutor. Following this, the Progress Reviews were completed and published to both students and parents via Go4Schools (distributed in the late November period). Students and Parents were separately emailed to inform them when the Review was available online and with details of how to log on to their Go4Schools account.

Opportunities were given to make subject appointments within one of the recent two Year 1 Parents' Consultation Evenings (held via Teams, on 1 December or 6 December).

Full Reports for Year 2 students will be prepared and distributed in February – following a further Progress Review. Reports will also be distributed via Go4Schools. First years have a further mini-review in February and full reports will be prepared in June following the May Internal Assessments.

Parents of students (and the students) following the Advanced Foundation Programme (AFP) were also invited to an AFP Consultation Evening we held in October - and this gave an opportunity for dialogue at a vital early stage with regard to those students aiming to improve their GCSE grades.

On an on-going basis if parents/carers particularly wish to discuss a matter with their son's or daughter's Senior or Personal Tutor, please contact the relevant member of staff directly by email or phone.

Getting involved and supporting others

Our students take part in a huge number of activities and there are countless opportunities to get involved.

Charity and Voluntary Work

Friends not Foes is an award-winning, student led group which works to support the local refugee community in Colchester area, and raise awareness of the refugee crisis. Our activities range from teaching English, babysitting, running a crèche at community meetings, waiting tables and kitchen work at the pop-up cafes, running stalls at various events, and organising a Christmas party for the children in partnership with the Colchester Police. The College continues to be an active member of Colchester Citizenship Alliance and was awarded College of Sanctuary status in 2018.

There are many opportunities available to our students to get involved in 'peer support' or 'buddying' schemes at College – either involving the subjects they study or in some cross-college areas. There are also a number of volunteering opportunities including student Library Champions and College Ambassadors – who work with the Admissions Department. If any students wish to get involved in these schemes, which provide an excellent opportunity to develop skills, they need to liaise with the appropriate members of staff with responsibility. Any students wishing to be involved in a College Ambassador role should contact Adrian Frost, Assistant Principal.

The Charities Committee have held a number of events including Pink Day and Children in Need activities and are planning events to promote awareness and collect donations. Tutor Groups are now preparing Christmas Hampers for local families, the elderly and refugees via local charitable organisations. There will also be a Christmas Jumper Day on Friday 9 December to raise funds for Save the Children and fund raising is underway to support Smile Train.

Conservation, Environment and Sustainability

A series of new initiatives have emerged this term and a number of these are outlined in our new Green Bulletin ([link to the first edition](#)). The Sixth Form College conservation volunteers have returned to local nature reserves and green spaces over recent months. As well as helping to address the serious problem of loss of biodiversity, volunteering is a valuable step in career progression. A number of former volunteers have gone on to study conservation and ecology at university and then into careers in this area, including Nick Shimwell who has recently been appointed Senior Ranger at the Sudbury Common Lands charity and Ben Plummer who is Climate Emergency Officer for Colchester Borough Council.

Expeditions, Trips and Visits

Since the start of the Autumn Term, there have been several trips and visits taking place, including a visit by students and staff from the Performing Arts department to see a play entitled 'Good Luck Studio' at the Mercury Theatre and the Sociology department organised a trip for students and staff to the Emmanuel Centre in London for 'Education in Action' lectures. There have been a number of residential trips this term and residential trips in 2023 include Paris (Photography), the Battlefields (History), Brancaster Bunkhouse, Norfolk (Creative Writing), Rome & Salamanca, Spain (Modern Foreign Languages), Cern - Geneva (Physics), Iceland (Earth Science & Geography) and St Ives in Cornwall (Geology Field Trip).

A volunteer group of students have completed a beach clean in Brightlingsea and conservation work in Wivenhoe Woods. They are planning a visit to Tiptree Heath in December for more conservation work. Also, in December, students and staff from the Media & Film department are going to the Warner Bros Studios in Leavesden for the Harry Potter Studio Tour and the Politics department are running a trip to London where students and staff will visit Parliament, Downing Street and the Supreme Court.

International Language Day

A day of International Languages event recently took place. It was a very well attended event, with students making fantastic presentations to celebrate their language and culture. The languages celebrated were Urdu, Romanian, German, Nigerian, French Creole from Mauritius and Turkish. There was a great, vibrant atmosphere in the language centre, a successful event.



Performing Arts – forthcoming events

Christmas Carol Service

A Christmas carol service will take place in St. Peter's Church, North Hill (just 'up the hill' from the College) on Tuesday 13 December at 19:30. The service will be very musical with significant contributions from our College musicians, including from our choir, orchestra, band, ensembles and soloists. After the event all are invited back to the College for drinks, including mulled wine, and mince pies.

Performing Arts Pieces

BTEC Level 3 Certificate in Performing Arts students will be performing their final practical pieces on 26 January, 19:00, in 002, featuring work by a number of different drama, dance and musical theatre practitioners.

BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate Performing Arts students will be performing their final practical pieces on 9 February, 19:00, in 002, featuring work by, or inspired by, a number of different drama, dance and musical theatre practitioners, including songs from In the Heights, Cats and Miss Saigon and work devised from the concepts and ideas of Stanislavski, DV8 and Gecko.

Sport

Since the start of term, the Sports & PE department have been extremely busy providing a wide range of sporting opportunities for the student body at both recreational & competitive level. Over 500 students are signed up for regular sporting activities, others are involved on an extra-curricular basis, and numbers continue to grow in both team sports and individual pursuits such as Table Tennis, Yoga and Boxing.

Here is a round-up of success achieved so far this year by the squads entered into the AOC competition 22-23 competitions alongside other competitive opportunities:

Students have represented the college at the AOC regional sports tournaments in the hope of qualifying for the national finals that takes place in April; x-country, table tennis, badminton, men & women's 7-a-side football, netball, tennis, rugby and basketball. So far, successes include, Oliver Prince – 1st place in the x-country, Lizzie Welstead – 2nd place in the x-country, Jessie Vecchiet – 1st place in women's badminton, Lizzie Thompson – 1st place in women's tennis and Alexander Edwards – 3rd place in men's badminton. All of these students qualify for the nationals alongside Archie Henington, Molly Drane who also had great performances in the x-country.

Further success in the AOC league fixtures include; men's, women's & mixed volleyball team winning all of their matches so far, in addition to the women's team gaining a place in the 2nd round of the cup. The men's 1st football team remain unbeaten with the 2^{nds} having some positive wins under their belt as well. The rugby team have got off to a great start with convincing wins against both Peterborough college 64-34 and Long Road 17-5. Both netball squads have played weekly with hard fought out games against Long Road College, Hills Road College Colchester County High School, 5 Dimensions Trust and Samuel Whitbread and despite having a number of games cancelled by the opposition the men's basketball team showed their strengths winning against Hills Road 72-45.

The talent of our students continues with the squash team continue their winning streak from last year by beating both Reeds and Hampton Schools in the 1st round of the English Schools Championship in all matches played. Furthermore, both Theo and Ollie Baker represented the college at the Essex Schools Golf Championship and qualified for the regional round with Daniel Staff wining the U18 handicap competition.

The PE department are extremely proud of the commitment and determination shown by our students in the competitive squads and look forward to continued success this year. Well done to all.