



SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE SCHOOL

A CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS AGED 11-19

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8th November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: STFS Sixth Form

As you will be aware, school budgets remain a significant challenge for schools, especially stand-alone academies such as ours. Having accountability for public funds means we need to ensure that every aspect of our expenditure has to be cost effective and offer the public value for money at every level. Our sixth form is small in comparison to other local schools in MK and Bucks. We run classes with fewer than 5 students and this becomes incredibly challenging when we are trying to provide a cost effectiveness for our sixth form.

As a result of this, the Governing Body have taken the decision to close the sixth form at the end of 2023. This is subject to approval from the Regional Schools Commission. This does not affect any of our current students in Year 12 and Year 13. Both year groups will complete their programme of study and sit their examinations as expected. This has been a huge decision for the school, and whilst it is one that we are disappointed to make, we do recognise that the financial commitment a sixth form brings is no longer sustainable. Despite our best attempts to make the sixth form financially viable, we have found it impossible to break into the established sixth form market within Buckinghamshire. The lack of certainty around student numbers at Post 16 is always a challenge and it is impossible to accurately budget for and ensure that we can run cost effective courses.

We are so proud of our sixth form students, past and present. We know they will go on to make a difference and become the adults we will have been proud to teach. We have always valued the whole student and this will not change. We have taught students at the very top level of academia through to students who ordinarily would not have got on to A level courses elsewhere. In trying to establish the sixth form we have always tried to recognise the whole student and give them opportunities they may not have had at other institutions.

Whilst this decision has been tremendously difficult to make, we do feel that it is the correct one for the future of STFS and the student body as a whole. I want to reassure those families with students in Year 12 and 13 currently that our expectations and passion will remain. We will ensure that the students leaving sixth form at the end of Year 13 this year and next, will do so with the security to go on to their next phase of learning, whether that be an apprenticeship, university, college or work. Our standards will not drop, and students and families can still expect the very best in teaching and learning whilst their child remains in our Sixth form.



For our current Year 11 students, we know this will come as a shock and will create some uncertainty around your sixth form destination. We will work with you throughout the remainder of Year 11 to ensure you make the right choices around your future. We will work closely with other schools and ensure that you remain informed about the local sixth form offers. Your tutors and Learning Leader will be available to offer advice and guidance with your decision making. From your point of view, you need to continue to work hard, ensure you have your revision schedule in place, and give everything you can to achieve the very best grades you are capable of. STFS has a good reputation, and alongside your hard work, this will help secure you the place at your chosen sixth form provider.

We have had assemblies today with students in Year 11 so they are aware of the situation and how we will support them through the coming months.

We have always felt and continue to feel that we have a unique school, and I want to reassure all parents that this will always remain. The financial decision to remove the sixth form means that the school will be able to redirect its resources to improve the curriculum we offer for all students; we will be able to build upon our exam successes at Key stage 4 and continue to provide an education of the highest quality for all of our students in Year 7-11. This change allows us to pour every effort in to enhancing the life chances of all students. Whilst this decision will bring to an end one feature of the school, it will allow the future of the school to thrive and ensure that we are able to continue to provide a high quality education to the young people in Year 7-11. I know that change brings uncertainty, and I know that there will be disappointment about this decision, but I am also hopeful in the future of STFS and firmly cementing ourselves as the school of choice for 11-16 years in Bucks.

We will continue to update you in the coming weeks, particularly families with children in Year 11 and Year 12.

Both myself and Sarah Driscoll, Chair of the Governing Body, are available for all parents, carers and students with any questions or concerns. These can be emailed to the school or to Sarah directly Gov.SarahDriscoll@sirthomasfremantle.org

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours faithfully,

Neale Pledger
Headteacher

