

NEWSLETTER 2 - September 11th

WELCOME from Head Mrs. Richardson

It has been a pleasure to meet many of you in the various Zoom conferences of this week. I apologise for the technology ‘fails’ which have affected some you – do please contact your child’s tutor if you have anything you would like to discuss.

This week I spoke to the School about the film *Invictus*, which I am sure many of you will have seen. If not, and you are over 13, I commend it to you! The film tells the inspiring true story of how the newly elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, knowing his nation remained racially and economically divided in the wake of Apartheid, joined forces with the Captain of South Africa's rugby team, Francois Pienaar. Believing he can bring his people together through the universal language of sport, Mandela works with Pienaar to rally South Africa behind the national rugby team as they hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which despite being far from favourites, they went on to win. The *Invictus* of the title is from the Nineteenth century poem *Invictus*, by William Ernest Henley. Henley, an English poet, found himself hospitalised in 1873, and while recovering from an amputation wrote *Invictus*. The poem concludes with the lines: “I am the master of my fate; / I am the captain of my soul” and Henley’s poems often engage themes of inner strength and perseverance.

While the impact of pandemic has brought home to us with a degree of certainty that in some areas we are NOT masters of our fate, there have been some recent events where we CAN act, and where we can be counted. The killing of George Floyd, and more recently Jacob Blake, has exposed again the racism which still exists in society. It has forced us to acknowledge that it is simply not enough to be non-racist, but we must be anti-racist. I am therefore delighted that Mount House staff and students are starting a new society which will support the education of our community on all types of inequality – whether inequality is racial, gender-based or homophobic, it is unacceptable, and it is vital that we recognise the benefits of embracing and celebrating our differences. I am looking forward to hearing the group’s proposals, and sharing them with you in the coming weeks and months.



The theme of kindness will be one which I will continue to push, and this week our attention has again been brought to negative impact social media and Mr. Kerr discusses this important topic more below.

I wish you a very relaxing weekend.



PASTORAL UPDATE from Mr Kerr

Navigating the teenage world and the use of technology has become even more difficult (if that is actually possible) as we transition back to physical school. Screen time and mobile phone use obviously rose rapidly during lockdown, and I know many parents are now trying to reverse some of the habits picked up during this period.



At the parent information meetings earlier this week Ms Smyth and Mrs Hillcoat-Hyde talked about this mobile phone use and I thought it would be a good idea to share this information with all parents in this newsletter.

These days it's harder for children to disconnect. It's one thing to navigate all the social pressures that come with being a young person but then to return home and log on to social media and discover that there is an extension to your day, must be exhausting. Our young people are always on performance mode as phones are the drivers and enablers of hyper-social environments. The likes of Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok allow us to have immense social environments in our pockets. To understand why the 'iGen' generation find mobile devices so attractive, one needs to consider the neuroplasticity of the brain at this time. There is an increase in dopamine activity leading to a heightened response of the reward centres of the brain. This makes the importance of being accepted, liked and valued more intensely felt at this stage of development.

There are many benefits to the use of smart phones. Clearly, technology is exciting and is useful for our young people, and its opportunities should be taught well within the digital curriculum. But they are not without their issues such as

- Stress, anxiety and depression
- A decrease in concentration
- An increase in cyber bullying and decrease in awareness and empathy as a result of the shift to digital communication

It is widely accepted that doing nothing is not an option. Once you have made the decision to give your son/daughter a smart phone or device, establishing clear expectations, rules and guidelines are crucial for them to enjoy it appropriately.

SUGGESTED AREAS TO INCLUDE IN A DIGITAL DEVICE USAGE CONTRACT

- Which websites they can use, what they can use the device for
- How long they can spend using a screen (use a kitchen timer)
- When they can use the device (e.g. after homework, not 1 hour before bedtime)
- Where they can use the device - the advice is that under 16's should not have screens in their bedrooms
- Follow the age ratings for movies, games and social networking sites
- Only communicate with contacts they know in person
- Be kind and respectful
- Remember that what goes online, stays online
- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Would you want your parent or teacher to see what you are doing/posting?

- Do not share personal information
- Safety – keep devices hidden when out in public
- Be careful around younger siblings

Please remember

1. You are the parent and are in charge. You will be paying the bills! Please don't give your son/daughter a smart phone or device and expect / hope that they will be able to self-regulate their usage.
2. Talk through your rules and expectations around where / when and how they will be allowed to use the device. Establish ground rules and explain why you are putting these conditions and parameters in place.

If you have questions or concerns with any of the points raised above please do let me know.

SMSC Update – Connectedness and support

As we worked hard to settle back into the routine of school life, our SMSC program focused in on the ideas of connectedness and support this week, with all students actively involved in a variety of activities linked to this theme.

The **Year 7** students met with their Guardians from the Sixth Form. The Guardians provide another person for students to chat to about their school lives, allowing the senior students to draw on their experiences of being in these years, reflect on the challenges they faced and the skills they put in place to have success at school.

Year 9 completed an activity on their Future Aspirations, identifying the pathways that they can take to achieve that goal, but also recognising the potential roadblocks that students could face along the way. As students identified these roadblocks, they were encouraged to think of the potential solutions or who within their support community could help them overcome this obstacle. These aspirations can form the foundation of 1-to-1 discussions with their Form tutors in future weeks.

Year 10 and 11 students completed an activity to identify their support networks both in and out of school, including family, friends, teachers and community leaders. Clearly recognising these support networks can help students become more confident in accessing them should they face concerns. The Sixth form students have also been working hard to plan sessions for the Year 11 group, exploring the idea of how to achieve their potential at the end of the year, based on their personal experiences. These will be delivered in the upcoming weeks.

All students took part in the Form Captain and Student Councillor hustings on Friday and we look forward to announcing the results next week.

Lockers

Students have been reminded by Form Tutors to empty their lockers from last year and transfer their schoolwork into the new locker that has been allocated for them. If last year's locker is in a classroom currently used by a different bubble, please can students complete this after school and wear a face covering.

Students have until Tuesday afternoon to complete this as locks from last year will be cut off on Wednesday.

Face Masks & Bubbles

Well done to all students for their quick adoption of face coverings as they move through common areas in the school, such as the library, bathrooms, staircases and any other spaces where it is challenging to ensure social distancing between the bubbles.

Each bubble within the school has an allocated entry/exit point to the school and break area. (Even though the changes of catching the virus are reduced outside we encourage students to maintain distancing.)

As a reminder these are:

Year 7-9

Break time: Tennis courts, form rooms

Entry/Exit point: Library door

Year 10-11

Break time: Lawn, form rooms

Entry/Exit point: Student door by the courts

Year 12-13

Break time: Area around the pond, form rooms

Entry/Exit point: Main reception door



Inter-House Activities

This Tuesday, each House began preparations for the first Inter-house activity “Show Us What Your House Is Made Of!” Working in their bubbles, students have brainstormed ideas about how best to show off their House. In Year 7-9, students are planning how to creatively show off the incredible skills and talents their House is full of, in a live performance. The Year 10 and 11 students are hard at work developing a visual art piece that reflects their House. In Sixth Form, as led by the student Head of House leaders, the pupils are devising a video that showcases all their House has to offer, which might include some dance moves, musical performances or be delivered in multiple languages!

MOUNT HOUSE SCHOOL REVISED COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

Our latest risk assessment can be found on our website or via this [link](#)

PUPIL INFORMATION FORM - URGENT

It is vital with the current Health and Safety protocols in place that we have a current updated record of all pupil contact data, health and allergy information. If you have not done so, please can you ensure you fill in the Pupil Information form via the link below as soon as possible if you have not already done so. This is now extremely urgent.

<https://forms.gle/7KGPZNLxNRxS5Kq48>

MORRISBY PROFILING for Year 11

This will take place on Tuesday 13th October.

MEET MR. BROZNY, HEAD OF SCIENCE



Mr Peter Brozny joined Mount House this term as our Head of Science.

Hailing from Canada, he has taught in the UK for over 10 years achieving top success with his students in Cambridge Chemistry Olympiads.

Mr Brozny enjoys bringing Science to life hosting events with The Royal Society and leading Liquid Nitrogen Science Week Demonstrations. Robotics is another keen scientific area of interest as he runs Robotics STEM days. Welcome to Mount House Mr Brozny!

GREEN TEAM message from Miss Gillet and Lola Mweene

This week the Green Team met on Tuesday to kick start our exciting 2020/21 programme!



The Year 7-10 students are working hard to devise a plan to teach the school community more about global environmental concerns such as single use plastic, renewable energy, ethical consumption and global citizenship. Our Sixth Form students have set themselves an aspiration to achieve the Eco School accreditation this year, which will involve a thorough audit of the energy systems, biodiversity and sustainability of purchases at school. The audit will also require the students to meet with members of staff such as

the Site Manager, Catering Team and Bursar, and will further guide our plan for our Mount House community activities during the rest of the year.

We are excited to be working on these goals and hope that more students will join us on this journey. Green Team meetings take place in Room 19 on Tuesday afternoons, from 4-5pm. Please see Miss Gillett or Lola Mweene for more information or email greenteam@mounthouse.org.uk.

MUSIC LESSONS AT MOUNT HOUSE from Mr Whitehouse

We offer the opportunity for students to enjoy a wide range of lessons on instruments and vocal coaching. We have some 'three quarter' and full-size violins available for students to borrow to see if they would enjoy the instrument. We also have pianos available to have lessons in School. Our range of peripatetic music teachers are all incredibly talented musicians and inspiring teachers of their instrument and we will feature one music teacher each week going forward in this newsletter.

This week we feature our **piano teacher Eric Flores** who has performed at various leading concert venues in the UK and North America with both traditional repertoire alongside his own compositions. He obtained his doctorate in music with support from the Royal College of Music and the Canadian Council for the Arts.

www.erickflores.com



If you would like your child to sign up to music lessons at Mount House with any of our peripatetic teachers then please complete the form on our website that can be found [here](#) and send the completed form to Mr Whitehouse whitehouses@mounthouse.org.uk. Hard copies of the form can also be found in Reception.

COACHES

If you would like your child to use the coaches, please fill out the registration form [here](#) and send it to coaches@mounthouse.org.uk. There are a limited number of spaces available on some routes.

It is mandatory for all pupils to wear their masks on the school coaches.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Congestion around the school at peak times can be a safety hazard for students and other members of the public. We will continue to investigate ways to minimise congestion at peak times to improve safety around the school gates. If you absolutely have to park, we ask that you park responsibly at all times in order to avoid accidents. We thank you for your cooperation and support.

Arrivals: Drop and Go

When arriving at school please ensure that you follow the school's traffic management system of 'drop and go' as directed by the Site Team. Students should be prepared to leave the car in a quick and safe manner. This means they should have their personal items readily available as they leave the vehicle. This will help us to improve the flow of traffic and assist in minimising peak time congestion and avoid any potential hazards. A polite reminder that only planned visitors to the school are permitted to park their car in the car park.

Departures: Pick up and Go

As you are aware the school has limited car parking space. When picking up your child(ren) from the school, please try not to arrive into the car park until 15:45. We ask that you text your child(ren) when you arrive so that they can make their way to the car park and this will assist in minimising congestion.



LITERACY TIPS from Mr Nancarrow

This is the first of a series where every week Mr Nancarrow will outline an idea to help your child with their literacy.



Listening to your child read and with focus on pausing for punctuation. Try to listen to your child read for around 5 to 10 minutes each week. There are many ways to improve reading fluency, and this week we look at the **importance of pausing for punctuation** so that each sentence or clause within a sentence can be digested as a piece of information. As your child reads, listen for the **flow of their pronunciation** and how far they **read the grammar of the text**. This simply means how they pause at the end of sentence and within a sentence when there is internal punctuation, such as a

comma. The aim is to encourage them to pause in order to build a natural fluency. Once you have listened, you can ask them about what they have read. Start with questions focusing on factual points and then move on to more in-depth questions that require them to infer from the text.

I hope you enjoy reading with your child and if you do have any questions please contact via email nancarrowp@Mounthouse.org.uk

STUDENT ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

It is important to keep children away from school if they feel unwell. In particular please remember that if a child has vomited, they are not allowed to return to school until 48 hours after the last time they were sick. If your child does become ill, please remember to inform the School and email reception@mounthouse.org.uk before 8.30am in the first day of their absence.

ART AT MOUNT HOUSE from Mrs Somerville and Mrs Baird



A Level Art student, Lesley Shi, produced this piece for her theme of concealment.

To enjoy a range of Mount House School artists work go to the Art website

<http://mounthouseschoolart.weebly.com/art.html>

SPORTS AT MOUNT HOUSE from Mrs Hillcoat-Hyde

This week **Key Stage 3 students** have taken part in a variety of health-related fitness activities developing knowledge of pace management and strength including interval training, circuits and completing a timed course.

Games Afternoons have been exciting for all students this week. We have used Hadley Wood Playing Field which offers open space and an opportunity for students to take part in cricket, rounders and athletics. Mr Shah taught the Year 7 & 8 boys cricket who were particularly motivated during session and the girls are looking forward to joining Mr Shah in the forthcoming weeks.

Sports Clubs have got off to a flying start with students taking part in running club before school on Monday, netball, basketball and football after school along with table tennis, badminton and cricket during lunch. It has been great to see students embrace the sporting opportunities and environments – well done to all those that have been involved.



The trampolines are currently awaiting routine maintenance which had not been possible during lockdown and we are awaiting confirmation of a date for this to be completed. This does mean that trampolining club on Monday 14th September we will be focusing on gymnastics again during the session. All students who have signed up to trampolining are welcome to attend. However due to the popularity of the club (with over 35 students wishing to take part), moving forward a rotation will be put in place. Students will be informed of the rotations in due course (once we have a confirmed date for routine maintenance). We will update you with the progress of trampolines in next week's newsletter.

CO-CURRICULAR AND ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES

It has been lovely to see a number of students sign-up and embrace the opportunities offered through the Co-Curricular and Academic Enrichment Programmes this week.



The Co-Curricular Programme has given students the opportunity to learn and develop new and existing skills and identify and share their passions with staff, whilst having fun with their peers within the school community.

The Academic Enrichment Programme has given students the opportunity to enrich their knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom. We will feature one club or society from the Programme every week as shown below.

We would be delighted to accept additional students within both programmes and have attached a copy of the programmes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Phillips (Academic Enrichment Programme) phillipst@mounthouse.org.uk and Mrs Hillcoat-Hyde (Co-Curricular Programme) hillcoat-hyden@mounthouse.org.uk

MARKETING & PR CLUB 4pm Monday in Room 14

As part of the Academic Enrichment Programme (AEP) our Marketing & PR Society will kick off at 4pm on Monday led by our Head of Marketing, Rhian Billington who has many years commercial marketing experience as well as Chartered Institute of Marketing and INSEAD Marketing Diplomas. The Club will look at all the basic marketing strategy concepts and work on real life implementation of communications and PR plans.

Please sign up emailing phillipst@mounthouse.org.uk or marketing@mounthouse.org.uk .



KEY DATES FOR NEXT WEEK

September 16th Year 10 HPV vaccinations