



Paul Kershaw, Head of School

Muhammed Ali once suggested that we should 'not count the days but make the days count'. Everyday has been made to count at STAGS this week. It has been a brilliantly busy week of learning and enrichment at all levels!

This week was Apprenticeships Week and there have been a range of assemblies including from Ocado Technology, Computacentre and the University of Hertfordshire detailing Degree Apprenticeships. These have been complemented by career based discussions about apprenticeships within subject areas and an Enrichment Friday whole school assembly courtesy of www.amazingapprenticeships.com. I would also like to bring your attention to links and information shared earlier in the week by Mrs Flint promoting aspects of careers and next steps. In addition, [this link](#) will take you to the Hertfordshire Careers Hub Parents and Carers Apprenticeship Survey. This survey is personalised to STAGS so it would be superb if Parents and Carers could share their views. During National Careers Week, Year 8 and Year 12 students will take part in our Inspirational Women's Event on 8 March. We would still like some more inspirational women volunteers. Please email careers@stags.herts.sch.uk if you can spare the time to get involved with this amazing opportunity for both year groups.

Students across the school benefit greatly from donations to the PTA and all donations made via the [PTA page on the website](#) make a big impact on learners. Signing up for the school fund, as well as details of donations which can be made via Gateway can be accessed via the link. Our amazing PTA were able to fund sports kits, a new mini bus, lighting, recycling bins, music equipment and tables for our newest Textiles classroom last academic year and are currently funding the library upgrades, a laser cutter, a trampoline

SUPPORT TRUST AMBITION GENEROSITY SUCCESS

and many other projects. All donations are welcome and please contact the PTA through the link about every aspect of fundraising and volunteering to support events. A huge thank you has to be extended both to the PTA and all involved in the amazing support they give to current and future students at STAGS.

We have eleven cast members in the St Albans & District Guide & Scout Gang Show this year which is fantastic. Details of performances and tickets can be accessed [via this link](#). We have heard about the hard work that all participants have undertaken at rehearsals over the last few months and it is wonderful to see STAGS students involved in this amazing programme. As I have often stated during Welcome Day Visits, the first time I ever set foot on the stage in the main hall at STAGS was for an audition for the Gang Show about 100 years ago! Very good luck to all the young people involved this year and to the crew and supporting adults from across the St Albans community too.



Last week, English and Performing Arts colleagues took forty A Level English Literature and Music students to the London Coliseum to see the English National Opera's production of The Handmaid's Tale. Mrs Mathurin who led the trip recounts that it 'was a memorising and memorable performance of a hard hitting text, and will certainly encourage discussion about how it was interpreted. The opportunity to experience an opera - without charge - with a live orchestra in such a historic building was a fantastic opportunity for students'. Thank you so much to Mrs Mathurin and all the staff that supported.

Many thanks also to Mrs Ritou and colleagues who took students to see a resplendent performance of The Phantom of the Opera last Monday at His Majesty's Theatre in London.

On Wednesday, seventeen Year 7 and 8 Student Leaders travelled to The Adeyfield Academy to take part in a Student Leadership Conference. They worked alongside students from across our Trust to consider how to be an effective leader. There were opportunities to develop teamwork and communication skills, as well as hear from an inspirational speaker, James Shone, about the importance of self belief. A huge thanks to Mrs Forni at The Adeyfield Academy for putting on such an inspiring conference and allowing the students from the two schools to work together. Students in attendance were effusive about the experience:

"We had an inspirational talk from James Shone. He explained to us that in life we are going to face some setbacks but we shouldn't let them define who we are. We need to learn from them and let them lead us to success."

"We learned how to improve our leadership skills, with new people, improving our social skills. The Conference taught me how to recognise my own skills, yet also grow off of my criticism. I adored how there was a speaker at the end that gave us insight to how hard life can be, but not to ever give up because 'I can, and I am!'"

Last year was another busy year for the James Marshall Foundation who support young people locally with education and career opportunities. Students across STAGS were awarded 15 grants in 2023 to support their learning in addition to 60 grants for school leavers from local secondaries assisting their move to college or university. For more information about JMF, please [follow this link](#).



It has been a wonderful week for sport at STAGS, with great success in Cross Country last weekend. Miss Stephens said that 'the course was very muddy and extremely hilly making it a tough race but every student's attitude and efforts were amazing to see and we had some really great results'. Students in Years 8

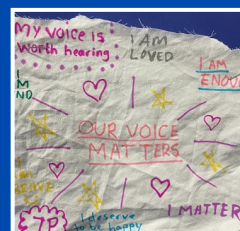
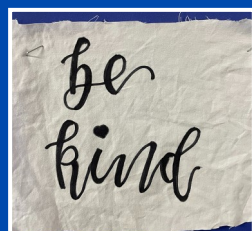
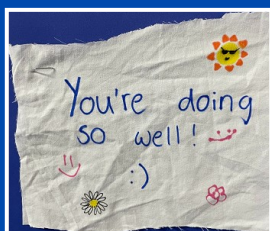
and 10 placed in the top 20 which is exceptional and Josie in Year 7 placed in the top 10 meaning that she will get to compete nationally! Well done Josie! A huge congratulations to Isabelle, Ella, Eva, Bella, Josie, Grace, Rebecca and India for representing the school so amazingly.

This week, the Year 7 football team beat St Albans High School 8-0 in the quarter final of the cup progressing the team to the next round. (Picture from the event on the front cover.) The Year 10 A-Team beat the High School 42-12 in their last District Netball game. A huge well done to both teams!



Eight of our Level 1 Sports Leaders also attended a disability and inclusivity training session with the School Games initiative. This will give them the opportunity to officiate disability tournaments and competitions in the future. What a wonderful opportunity and achievement to all involved.

This week was Children's Mental Health Week with the theme 'Our Voice Matters'. In form time, students wrote words of affirmation on fabric squares which are currently being displayed in our foyer for everyone to read. Plus, our Anti-Bullying and Wellbeing Ambassadors sold Green Pins at lunchtime, raising money for the Mental Health Foundation. There was also the opportunity all week, for students to nominate fellow students for any acts of kindness in line with the STAGS values of Support, Trust and Generosity in our 'Acts of Kindness' post box, beautifully decorated by students!



Safer Internet Day also took place this week with the theme 'Inspiring change? Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online'. Lots of pledges were made in form time, by both students and staff, as to how they will make the internet safer and displayed in our foyer. Our IT Support Team proudly led the way!

We wait in anticipation this week as our STAGS Read will be announced early next week. It is a wonderful story and I encourage everyone in our community to read it. I would also like to remind Parents and Carers that the next Parent Book Group will be on Wednesday 13 March and the book is Study for Obedience by Sarah Bernstein. It would be amazing to see you in the library on this date from 6pm and to get some newcomers involved in this group.



At lunchtime today, the hall was buzzing with students celebrating the Chinese/ Lunar New Year ahead of tomorrow, which this year, is the 'Year of the Dragon'. Students enjoyed making Chinese Lanterns and origami butterflies and purchasing Chinese 'red pockets' filled with gold chocolate coins and vegetable jiaozi's. We look forward to sharing more information with you next week.

It was wonderful to speak with Year 9 families at Parents' Evening yesterday with an attendance of over 93%. Communication between teachers, parents and carers is so integral to effective learning and deepened understanding. We look forward to liaising with families across the school during next Wednesday's Form Tutor Review Meetings as per guidance shared earlier in the term and week. Just a reminder that school closes to students at 12:20pm on Wednesday 14 February until normal opening on Monday 26 February and we wish you all the very best for any half term adventures you have planned.

All best wishes,



Diary Dates

Wednesday 14 February

School closes for students at 12.20pm

Form Tutor

Parents' Afternoon, 12.30-4pm

Year 9 Options Deadline

Thursday 15 - Friday 16 February

School is closed to Students

Monday 19 - Friday 23 February

Half Term

Monday 26 February

SEND Parent Group Meeting, 7-8.30pm,
LRC

Monday 26 Feb - Friday 8 March

Year 11 Progression Meetings

Tuesday 27 February

Year 11 Parent Revision Evening,
Main Hall, 11(A-F) 6-6.50pm, 11(H-S) 7-7.50pm

Wednesday 28 February

Year 10 Malta Netball Tour Parent Information
Evening, 6pm, Hall

Interhouse STAGS Bake Off

Tuesday 5 and Wednesday 6 March

Flair Dance Performance, 7-8.15pm, Hall

Thursday 7 March

PTA Meeting, 7-8pm, Learning Resource Centre

Thursday 7 - 10 March

Year 10 Languages Spanish Trip to Madrid

Year 10 & Year 12 ADT Trip to Madrid

Friday 8 March

Year 8 and Year 12 Inspiring Women
Networking Event



Notices



Hertfordshire Secondary Schools' Inter-District Swimming Championships is to be held on Friday 22nd March, 2024 at Watford Woodside pool starting at 7.30pm (7.00pm warm-up).

Swimmers that would like an opportunity to swim in this gala and represent St Albans District schools must use [the following form](#) to sign up by Friday 1st March 2024.

Selection is based on times in races.



Notices



**STRIKE THE
#INSPIREINCLUSION POSE
TO SHOW SOLIDARITY**



International
Women's Day



STAGS
CAREERS

Inspiring Women

Networking Morning

Year 8 are invited to meet with a variety of inspirational women and learn about their career journeys

Friday 8th March, 9-11am

St Albans Girls' School
Main Hall/Restaurant

Look out for an email from careers@stags.herts.sch.uk for more information



**STRIKE THE
#INSPIREINCLUSION POSE TO SHOW
SOLIDARITY**



International
Women's Day



STAGS
CAREERS

Inspiring Women

Networking Breakfast

Year 12 are invited to a networking breakfast to meet with a variety of inspirational women and learn about their career journeys

Friday 8th March, 8-8.45am

St Albans Girls' School
Main Hall/Restaurant

Look out for an email from careers@stags.herts.sch.uk for more information

Notices

Safer Internet Day took place on Tuesday 6 February. The National Online Safety organisation provides a weekly newsletter with regular updates. This week's focus is on 'Monkey', an online platform which randomly matches its users for 15-second conversations. Click [here](#) to view the PDF. For more information on this and other useful online guides, follow the link to their website by clicking [here](#).

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to help an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit nationalcollege.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MONKEY

Also known as Monkey Cool, this platform aims to fill the gap left by Omegle (which has now shut down) by placing users in random video chats with strangers. Participants use their mobile number and Snapchat username to connect to the service, where they can make matches, message other people and join group chats. The mobile version has been removed from the App Store due to safety concerns, but iPhone owners can still access the site via their web browser. The app remains available on Google Play, where its listing claims that Monkey has more than 30 million users worldwide.

AGE RESTRICTION 17+
Although the lack of age verification means that we believe younger people could easily register with a false date of birth.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

The app claims to use AI to detect sexual content or activity that violates its policies, along with having a 24/7 moderation team. However, reports in the media continue to indicate that explicit content remains commonplace on Monkey (including sexually graphic or violent material) and is therefore accessible to anybody who uses the app – including those aged under 18.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

The obvious risk in accepting random video chat partners is that users cannot know what or who they will see on their next connection. Talking to strangers is, of course, potentially dangerous – especially for children who might be persuaded to meet up with these people offline. The app lets users find each other by location, increasing the chances of a child being matched with a stranger from their local area.

IN-APP SPENDING

While Monkey is free to download, it nevertheless offers in-app purchases promising to unlock access to premium features. For example, users who wish to make use of 'Knock Knock chat' (Monkey's text-based messaging option), rather than the app's Chatroulette-style random video calling feature, will need to pay to be able to do so.

INTRUSIONS ON PRIVACY

According to Monkey's privacy policy, personal information (such as name, profile picture and date of birth), user-contributed content (any photos, texts, videos and screenshots shared) and each user's browser and IP address are collected. That is a considerable amount of data for Monkey to gather on its users – and all of this information is shared with third parties.

Advice for Parents & Carers

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

Even if you're comfortable with your child using Monkey, it's still important to talk about the potential dangers. It's crucial, for instance, that young people recognise the risks that stem from video chatting with strangers: that they understand not to share identifying information (like their street or school name); and that they know what to do if they are exposed to inappropriate content.

REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Monkey states in the safety section of its site that "people are given the power" and that, to a large extent, Monkey is "self-governing". If a user is exposed to sexually explicit or inappropriate content on the platform, they can select the 'police' emoji in the top right corner of their screen to submit a report for Monkey's moderation team to review.

RESTRICT IN-APP PURCHASING

If your child is accessing Monkey via an Android device, you can prevent them from making in-app purchases through the device's settings. If you do allow your child to use the site, we'd recommend that you enable this feature: young people have been known to spend significant amounts of money in their desire to unlock more features in apps such as this.

SPOT THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child is spending too much time on Monkey – or that they may have been exposed to inappropriate or distressing content – it's important to watch for potential indications that they've been affected emotionally. They could be unusually irritable or unable to concentrate, for example, or failing to complete their homework or even to eat regular meals.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Buchanan is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed a system ranked as the leading online safety platform for schools. She has written various guidance papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and wellbeing behaviour of young people in France, the UK and Australia.

The National College **NOS National Online Safety** #WakeUpWednesday

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