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## **The Parents' Guide**

**2010-2011**

# Sf Values & Expectations

**You can expect to receive a high quality education at College**

***We expect you to:***

Co-operate with **all staff** and other students to make sure that lessons proceed productively

Attend all timetabled commitments. arrive punctually and bring all necessary equipment

Hand in all work by the deadline set

Take responsibility for your own learning

**You can expect us to help you achieve your best**

Have high expectations of yourself, striving to achieve your best in all things and taking pride in what you do

Play a full part in College life, making the most of the opportunities given to you

Keep College informed about planned, unavoidable absence

**You can expect to be treated fairly, politely & with respect**

***We expect you to:***

Treat others fairly, politely and with respect

Comply with the College's Code of Conduct

Behave without prejudice & be tolerant of the views & lifestyles of others

Promote the good name of the College by behaving respectfully to members of the local community, on and off College premises

**You can expect us to tell you about any concerns we have about you.**

We expect you to let us know of any worries or concerns you have about your time at College

## IMPORTANT DATES AT A GLANCE - YEAR 1

September	8 21	Teaching starts 1:1 reviews start today
October	5 7	1:1 reviews end today Tutorial Parents Evening
November	8 – 19 23 30	Progress Check Summary Reports to parents 1:1 reviews start today
December	13 17	1:1 reviews end today Term ends 1.25
January	10-21	AS unit exams
February	3 8 10	Consultation Evening 1 Consultation Evening 2 Progression Evening
March	10-25 29	Progress Check 1:1 reviews start today and summary Report to Parents
April	5-8	Half Day Blocks (for mocks/ coursework)
May	18	Year 1 Exam Leave starts
June	13 14 27	A2 lessons begin 1:1 reviews start today Report to Parents

**Please note that the period after May/June exams is now a particularly crucial time for students – work continues on the A2 programme.** If it is IMPOSSIBLE to arrange the main family holiday outside term time, please write to the College to ask permission before you book your holiday. Holidays under other conditions during term time are not permitted.



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To be an outstanding sixth form college where students enjoy learning in a supportive and stimulating environment, which develops their potential and independence.

## **PARENTS' CHARTER**

As the parent or guardian of a student at this College, you can expect to:

- Play a full role in the partnership between the students and the College.
- Receive comprehensive information from the College at the beginning and during the course of study.
- Receive information about the progress of your son/daughter each term, either by invitation to a Consultation Evening or in writing.

If you are concerned about any aspect of your son/daughter's progress, please contact their Group Tutor or Student Support Leaders.

The College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity & treatment for all students.

## A Parents Guide to Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

Welcome to Shrewsbury Sixth Form College. As parents or guardians of our new students you will want their time at college to be both enjoyable and successful. This can be an exciting but apprehensive time for them and you. They are starting rigorous courses, meeting new people and being introduced to a range of activities. It is important that they settle down quickly and develop the confidence and motivation to make the most of being a student at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.

Some of our working practices may be different from those they have experienced at previous schools and may take some adjustment, but we work closely with our partner schools to try to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

A lot of information is already available and expanded upon in the **Induction Handbook** and **Student Planner**, but we felt it would be useful to address some of the main questions parents ask at this stage. We also hope that you will contact us at any time if you have concerns or questions. By working together we hope to guide your son/daughter towards success.

### What is the role of the Tutor?

Your son/daughter is a member of a Tutor Group of about 25 students, all in the same year, but studying a variety of different subjects. They meet regularly with their tutor, either as part of the group or on an individual basis. The tutor is there to give help, advice and support, to communicate important information, to monitor academic progress and to encourage personal and social development. They work closely with subject staff and Student Support Leaders. You will have the opportunity to meet your son/daughter's tutor at the tutorial evening held on Thursday 7 October 2010.

The four Student Support Leaders will also be available for consultation:

Sarah Carter SJC  
Aidan Long AL  
Stephen MCAinden SM  
Tina Rutter CMR

Although we hope we have covered most of the queries you have at this stage, you may feel there are glaring omissions in this handbook. Please let us know of any by filling in the slip below and returning it to College (Sarah Carter, Student Support Leader).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comment**

## **What is this free time my son/daughter has on their timetable?**

This is one of the most obvious differences between Sixth Form College and previous school experiences. It refers to periods when there are no timetabled lessons. Students often use this time in the early days to socialise with friends, but once term starts in earnest and the appreciation of the work load grows, students increasingly use the time to work individually and independently.

The College has a **Learning Centre** which offers excellent resources and study facilities for students. Their tutor and subject staff will help them make the best use of their time and to develop successful study habits. Suggestions on how to use this time constructively are on Moodle (the computer based communication channel).

Free time can also provide an opportunity to become involved in College activities, e.g. sport, College Council, community activities, work experience and a variety of societies. There is also the chance to attend subject or study support, which is available to all students of all abilities. There are also social areas on site where students can talk and meet with other students.

The two main social areas, one on the main site, Food For Thought, and another on St. Austins Street, The White House, offer a range of snacks and drinks between 9.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. There are also vending machines and drinking water dispensers/fountains.

Students are free to venture into town or take advantage of the local Quarry park. We would be grateful for your support in reinforcing our messages that students should consider other members of the public and clear away any litter they bring to the Quarry.

## **What are “1:1 reviews”?**

Once or twice a term, your son or daughter will have an individual meeting with his or her group tutor. The one-to-one meeting is an important chance to discuss academic progress and share any concerns.

## **How much homework should I expect them to be doing?**

No student can complete the work they need to do for their subjects in their College “free time”.

If little or no work is being done at home it is unlikely your son/daughter is making the most of their course. There is always research, reading and reviewing to be done when they are not in classes. As a guide, we would expect students to spend about 3-4 hours outside lessons per subject per week. Students are issued with a **Student Planner** to help them plan their schedule of work.

## What is the College policy on attendance?

Attendance at College is extremely important and should be as close as possible to 100% in all subjects, including General Studies, IT for learning and tutorial. The College policy and its expectations are clearly explained in the Student Planner.

Missing lessons can lead to serious problems in understanding topics and in falling behind with coursework. The College operates a centralised Attendance Monitoring System and tutors will quickly be alerted if this is the case.

- If attendance falls below 90% students will be expected to pay their examination fees. Poor attendance will also affect any financial assistance given towards travel costs.
- Students who qualify for an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will only receive payment if attendance is 100% (or if there has been an authorised absence).
- Students with less than 80% attendance on May 1<sup>st</sup> will not automatically be allowed to return to College for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their course.

There should be enough non-lesson time in any week for **driving lessons** or **medical** or **dental appointments** to be arranged without attendance in lessons being affected. If a period of absence is unavoidable, please let us know well in advance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure staff know in advance of any planned absence. In the case of **illness**, you should telephone the College before 10.00 a.m. to let us know of the absence and its likely duration (01743 266828) or by email at [absence@ssfc.ac.uk](mailto:absence@ssfc.ac.uk). Please ensure that a note of explanation, signed by you, is provided for the tutor on return. It is important that students go to see their subject teachers after any absence to find out about work to be caught up.

If your son/daughter is unexpectedly absent from a lesson you may receive an early evening phone-call from College that day, enquiring as to the reason.

**Lateness:** Students are expected to arrive promptly for all classes. They may not be allowed entry to the class if very late unless there is a legitimate reason.

### Term Dates

Autumn Term: Wednesday 1 September  
to Friday 17 December 2010  
(Half-term Monday 25 – Friday 29 October)

Spring Term: Tuesday 4 January 2011  
To Friday 8 April 2011  
(Half-term Monday 21 – Friday 25 February)

Summer Term: Tuesday 26 April 2011  
to Friday 15 July 2011  
(Bank Holiday Monday 2 May)  
Half-term Monday 30 May – Friday 3 June)

Please refer to the back page for a full list of important dates during the College year.

## Communication with parents

Although students are encouraged to develop their independence whilst at College, we recognise the value and importance of effective communication with parents.

We will communicate via letter (by post in important or sensitive matters), email and through announcements on the College website (eg. Closure due to bad weather, [www.ssfc.ac.uk](http://www.ssfc.ac.uk)). We request that parents inform us of changes to contact details, either by 'phoning College reception or Liz Hird in Admissions.

If you have any concerns about the progress of your son/daughter, please contact the relevant group tutor or subject teacher. If you are uncomfortable about doing this, you can write directly to the Principal or email [parents@ssfc.ac.uk](mailto:parents@ssfc.ac.uk) and your concern will be passed to a relevant member of staff. You will be kept informed of the progress of your query.

## Complaints and Grievance Procedure

The Complaints and Grievance procedure is designed to resolve individual problems or complaints with the support of College. All complaints will be dealt with both confidentially and seriously. We hope that you can resolve any complaint by discussion with the person concerned. If not, the mechanism outlined in the Complaints and Grievance procedure will be followed. Information about this procedure is available from the College.

We hope that we have answered most of the queries you may have at this stage. As your son/daughter progresses through College there may be other issues you would like to discuss without waiting for a formal Consultation Evening. Either write to the Tutor or Student Support Leader, or phone College to make an appointment to speak to them.

## Can students take holidays during term-time?

The short answer is **no** – unless there are exceptional circumstances.

We strongly request your support in discouraging any holidays in term-time as this adversely affects work and progress. If it is impossible to take the family holiday at any other time, please write to the tutor for permission for your son/daughter to miss College. Important external exams take place in January and in the Summer Term and even when these are complete the remainder of the term is crucial for assessment, reference preparation and forward planning. Vital A2 work begins in June as soon as students return from their AS exam leave.

## Is it all right for students to have part-time jobs?

Many students have part-time jobs, which can benefit them financially and give them useful experience, however, it is essential that College work comes first. If a student takes on too much (for most students this would be working more than one day at the weekend and one evening), this affects their College progress. Excessive involvement in part-time jobs and other activities will be counter-productive both in the short-term and for career prospects. **They must not have paid work during the normal College day, i.e. 8.45 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.,** as they must be available during this time to meet any College requirements.

## Are students allowed to park at College?

We regret there is no parking space available for students' cars. If it is essential for your son/daughter to park in College (for example: for medical reasons or to deliver heavy equipment), they must arrange this in advance with Student Services. We would also ask for your support in discouraging your son/ daughter from parking in the residential roads around the College.

## Is there any financial support available?

Students who decide to stay in Further Education can now claim an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) if the household income is under £30,810 p.a. If you feel you might be eligible but have not yet applied, details are available from Student Services and from the EMA helpline – free on 080 810 16219 (website: [www.ema.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.ema.dfes.gov.uk)).

The College is also able to offer a limited amount of financial assistance to help meet the costs of college. Please phone your son/daughter's Student Support Leader, if you wish to discuss the matter in confidence, or ask to speak to Sarah Carter direct.

Leaflets outlining the financial support available to students can be found in the Learning Centre, tutor rooms and on the college Intranet.

## Can I get help with transport costs?

Transport policies can seem very confusing but the College may be able to help towards the cost of transport. For the latest update on this please ask your son/daughter to get details from Student Services or contact Sarah Carter direct.

## I would like to get more involved in what's going on at College. How can I do this?

- Through supporting College events, e.g. Plays, concerts, fund-raising events.
- By offering a valuable work-shadowing placement.
- By supporting your son/daughter through what can sometimes be a stressful time for them, allowing them their independence, but also keeping us informed of any of your concerns.

## Will a student be disadvantaged if they have been diagnosed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty?

Not at all. Please do let us know immediately if your son/daughter has received any additional support of any kind in their previous school and we will seek to continue that support in an appropriate manner.

Students who have been identified as having a SLD are entitled to additional individual support, extra time in exams, or other equivalent arrangements, but only if a formal assessment has been made. We make every effort to identify those students who are entitled to these arrangements, and in appropriate cases carry out an assessment in College by qualified staff and provide support.

If you are concerned and think that your son/daughter might benefit from an assessment, please contact Sue Richardson. (Co-ordinator of Study Support) or Maggie English, as soon as possible.

Universities now encourage applications from people with disabilities or SLDs and most strive to provide the assistance necessary to pursue an HE course (e.g. Laptop computers, tape recorders, specialist tutors and drop-in centres).

## What is study support?

It is not uncommon for new students to experience some teething problems. They may find it hard to adjust to the demands of a new subject or to different teaching methods and assessments. Learning to organise notes and prioritise tasks can present a challenge to even the most academically able student. In addition to the help and advice available through subject teachers (**subject study support**) and tutors, there are additional **general study support** sessions. Students can ask to be referred by teaching staff for individual help with such areas as essay writing, note-taking, interpretation of data, revision strategies and organisation of time. Specialist support is also available for students with Specific Learning Difficulties.

## Will I be contacted if there is a problem?

We will contact you if we have serious concerns about your son/daughter's progress and/or attendance.

You, in turn, are encouraged to contact your daughter/son's Student Support Leader or tutor at any time. We aim to create an atmosphere in College where students are treated as mature individuals and we

encourage them to take increasing responsibility for their own progress and behaviour.

However, if a situation arises which is not resolved by discussions with the student and close monitoring, then we may invite you to come to College for further discussions with the tutor or Student Support Leader. The student will normally be informed of any letters or phone calls home and will be expected to attend any meetings arranged.

If problems persist, the student will be put on **Report** and their attendance /work monitored on a daily basis. If there is still no improvement the student, parents, teachers and Student Support Leader will negotiate and sign a **Contract** which outlines the conditions on which the student will be able to continue studying at the College. Failure to meet the terms of the Contract will mean that the student may be asked to leave.

### **My son/daughter has no idea what they want to do when they finish College. Will they be given any careers guidance?**

Yes. Their time at College will pass very quickly. Careers preparation is built into the Tutorial programme, and help is also available from the Careers Department both on employment opportunities and on university courses. We have our own qualified Careers Advisor plus the services of Connexions and the area is well equipped with books, DVD's and computers to help your son/daughter in their research. You are, of course, very welcome to attend any careers interviews, and Sarah Jarrett, our Careers Advisor, is available for consultations at parents evenings.

All students are also invited to Shrewsbury School's programme of HE talks which are held on Tuesday evenings – details of which are available from tutors, Student Services or Careers.

There is also the opportunity for students to participate in post 16 work experience. For certain career choices work experience is essential e.g. physiotherapy, medicine, teaching.

Advice is also available for second year Advanced Level students intending to enter employment on completion of their course. A

Progression Evening is held during the students' first year, where representatives from employment areas and higher education institutions are available for consultation and advice.

### **Is there a Counselling Service for students?**

Confidential counselling is available for students. The Counsellor, Lorraine Manley, is willing to talk in confidence about anything which is bothering students, however, large or small they think the problem is. The aim is to help students explore and clarify the problems or issues important to them and to help them work out a way forward. She can be reached directly on 07929 847495 or an appointment can be made through Student Services. She is currently in college every Tuesday.

### **What other support is available?**

A Youth Support Worker is employed by the College. Wendy Challinor is in College every day in term time and is happy to discuss any issues related or unrelated to College. She is also running the new CHAT+ service in College, in conjunction with Shropshire Council; through which students will be able to access support for a range of personal, social and health problems.

### **I need to get a message to my son/daughter at College. How can I do this?**

If there is an **emergency** please phone College (01743 235491) and we shall do our best to get a message to your son/daughter.

### **Will I have to pay for anything?**

- No course fees are payable by full-time, day time students aged 16-19 at the start of their course, who have been resident in the European Community for the past 3 years.
- Exam fees are not normally charged. However if a student chooses to resit a modular exam then they are normally expected to pay. If their attendance falls below 85% on any particular course they will also be invoiced for the exam entry fee.
- Most textbooks are provided by the College but some departments may ask students to pay a deposit for books or to buy additional materials. Further details are available on request.
- Students will be expected to provide A4 lined paper and files.



## How will I know how my son/daughter is doing?

There is a formal programme of events to make sure you are aware of your son/daughter's progress. Please see the calendar on the back page for the dates of Consultation Evenings. These, held throughout all courses, are provided for consultation between parents, staff and students so we strongly recommend that parents and students attend these evenings together. The timetable for appointments is made by students with subject teachers. **Newsletters** reminding you of these and updating you on other College events will be sent home termly. In addition there are several times in the year when students are assessed to see how much effort they are putting into their work and the level of attainment they have reached (**progress checks**). Subject staff and Tutors will discuss individual targets with your son/daughter, so that they can maximise their success. You will be informed of their progress in these, at Consultation Evenings or by a Progress Review Report, which is sent home via your son/daughter.

**(See inside back cover for dates.)**

## What is the College policy on coursework?

It is very important that students adhere to the college guidelines on coursework. These are clearly explained to students. Failure to do so can lead to disqualification. All parents will receive the Qualification & Curriculum Authority "Guide for Parents".

## Will my son/daughter be able to change their programme of study?

All students who wish to join Shrewsbury Sixth Form College are made aware from their first interview that they must select and continue on four core subject block commitments (or equivalent) excluding Tutorial, General Studies, Extended Project, Critical Thinking, IT for Learning or Enrichment. Any student wishing to make a change to his or her course must speak to subject staff concerned and see their Student Support Leader. Although it may be possible for students to swap subjects very early in the course, it is expected that students will not reduce the number of subjects they study.

## Sport & Recreation

### Health & Safety and Student Responsibilities

1. The college has insurance with the Heath Lambert Group for public and employers liability.
2. The college has personal accident insurance for all college activities with Perkins Slade Insurance Broker. Details are on the Sport & Recreation notice board.
3. There is no cover for loss of earnings for students in part time employment who are unable to work due to an injury caused during a college sport or recreational activity.
4. Transport is provided by the college to sporting and recreational activities when necessary. This may be a local coach company or college minibus.
5. Students are occasionally transported in staff cars where the appropriate staff insurance is held for usage of the car at work.
6. Students may accept lifts from other students to and from college sport and recreational activities. This is at their own risk.
7. Students may ask to be dropped off at a more suitable location on the return journey on request.
8. Students may make their own way home from college activities off site.
9. Students are expected to provide their own personal protective equipment e.g. gum-shield, shin pads etc. for the appropriate sport.
10. Students are responsible for alerting members of staff involved in activities of any relevant medical conditions.
11. Students with asthma are expected to have their inhalers accessible at all times.
12. Students not wanting to have their photo / video taken and possibly used in promotions or display material should make themselves known.
13. Any valuables such as MP3 players / phones / cameras / jewellery / cash etc. are the responsibility of the student. This is not covered by the college and should be covered by household insurance.

