



Dear Parents/Carers

It has been an extremely sad and difficult week at school following the sudden and unexpected death of Thomas Balkham.

Tom was a kind and charismatic young man who always made it his mission to brighten the day of others. Tom will be remembered fondly by his teachers for his infectious personality and his ability to master any work that was put in front of him. He excelled across a range of subjects and quickly grasped difficult concepts. Tom was a popular boy who had a wide circle of friends and made the lives around him richer with his presence.

With the consent of his family, we will be giving students and staff the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings, through a memorial book, that we will place in the Student Services area on the Arundel Road site. We will also open up the memorial garden near the Student Services area at break and at lunchtime for students to have time and space to reflect and write a note or memory if they wish. The books will then be given to Tom's family. We will also be organising a football match in honour of Tom. He was a lynchpin of the school football team who never missed a game and wore the number 6 shirt with immense pride. At the team's request and with his family's blessing, the memorial football match will take place between the Year 8s and Year 9s. We are also aware that our students are often coming together outside of school time to share their memories of Tom. This reflects how loved Tom was but I would urge our young people to only congregate in areas of the beach where it is safe to do so.

Moving forward, there will be a Tom - shaped hole in Year 9 and in the lives of all that knew him. He was and will remain a significant presence in our school community. We will continue to do all we can to continue to honour and celebrate the life of a much - loved young man.

We have been informed by Tom's family that his funeral will take place at 3.00pm on Tuesday 19 March at Wealden Crematorium. We will be closing the school at lunchtime on that day out of respect for Tom and his family; and to allow friends to attend the funeral. Following the funeral there will be a celebration of Tom's life at Seaford Rugby Club.

We have an extensive Wellbeing Team in the school as well as the Mental Health Support Team and The Youth Counselling Project. Along with the Educational Psychology Service the specialist practitioners are on hand to support all young people through this difficult time in the days and weeks ahead. We will continue to engage with the Local Authority and external organisations to deliver as much support as we can. Attached is a support guide for your child, signposting to internal and external support should they need some help at this time. Also attached is some information for parents and carers to support your child through grief along with some relevant external organisations if it is useful to you. We will continue to share any information that we feel will be of use to you to support your family.

It has been an extremely sad time but I am very proud of the way students and staff are supporting each other through this period. We must continue to look after each other over the coming weeks and I ask that Tom's family's request for privacy to be respected.

Best wishes,

Mr Ellis
Headteacher

Seaford Learning Trust

Mr R Ellis, Headteacher

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