

October 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Now we are a few weeks in to the term I thought it would be useful to send an update on how the start of the school year has gone.

Many thanks to those of you who have responded to the questionnaire, I will analyse these more carefully this week and also hope to address some of the common themes in this letter.

We have been really pleased with how well pupils have adapted to the changes in school since the start of term. Behaviour has been really positive and the vast majority have done as we have asked and kept to year group bubbles and remembered to wear masks on corridors. Some pupils are also choosing to wear masks in lessons and this is fine too. We have been really impressed with all pupils, year 7 have settled in to school brilliantly, as have new Year 12 students. Pupils in other year groups have got back in to good lesson routines really quickly and efficiently.

This morning I spoke to all pupils in a Google Meet assembly, to explain some changes and reinforce some key messages. I am attaching a PowerPoint that outlines these messages. If you child is currently at home isolating, please share with them. In summary, we have today made changes to timetables to enable pupils to have lessons in specialist classrooms. We are able to do this because routines for moving on corridors and cleaning hands and frequent touch points have been so well adhered to. I have asked pupils to ensure they continue to do this. We continue to use two bells at lesson change to focus pupil movement on a prompt start to lessons and to avoid pupils taking the opportunity to 'walk round' the building between lessons.

In addition, Year 7 pupils moved in to sets today, as with all year groups; setting is regularly monitored and moves between groups are made when needed, usually at the end of term.

We have now had 6 pupil cases in school. Two separate cases in Year 12, one in Year 7 and three in Year 11. One of the Year 11 cases was connected to a pupil in school, but all others have caused by contact outside school. Your support with coping with isolation, if it has affected your child, has been really appreciated. We will continue to try to minimise the number of pupils we send home with each case, and have worked hard to identify those who are close contacts rather than sending whole year groups home. I am pleased this has been appreciated by you.

A number of parents have raised questions about lunchtime. We will rotate the order in which pupils get food, so the same year group is not in last all the time. After half term this will rotate on a weekly basis. Pupils will continue to be allowed to eat outside, they can eat in the dining room if they prefer. We have ordered some additional seating for all outside areas so pupils do not need to sit on the floor. In addition we are hoping to put a covering on most of the quad area to provide shelter and allow us to make use of outdoor spaces once the weather deteriorates further. We have been lucky with the weather so far, but pupils will be able to eat in form rooms if we have rain at lunchtimes in future.

Continued...

I know parents of pupils in Year 11 and 13 will be particularly anxious about next summer's exams. We share your frustration about the lack of plans from the DfE currently, and as a parent of a Year 11 pupil myself I completely understand how difficult the uncertainty is. As soon as we hear anything concrete from the Government I will pass details on. Rest assured, teaching staff are making sure they plan carefully for covering the curriculum fully whilst also revisiting topics taught from a distance in the lockdown. We do feel the majority of pupils did really well at keeping up with work whilst not in school, so we are confident we will be ready for exams – if they run as usual.

The induction sessions and follow up wellbeing days in September and October have been well received and have allowed us to ensure all pupils are well aware of expectations and that they are aware of the support available to help with their wellbeing.

We are increasing our use of Google classroom, and our staff as well as pupils and parents are learning more as each day passes! You should now find as a minimum that all homework and some lesson resources are on the Google classroom. We are using Google Meet for assemblies, and I was delighted how well the parents evening went using this format too. I am hopeful that we can use this method for all future parents evenings until we can return to face to face. If you would like some information about Google Classroom there are parent guides on the website here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_S9A45vTRArvGC7OUwfCzEwRgNRUypjLNIX9vO8_MOs/htmlview?fbclid=IwAR0wmfVWL-g03DQdl8rQMTTrDs4BEHem36hWeVHNdeMTxlqYI6OQj8jRCWuY&pru=AAABc9pGZHY*8h_AimK-s8NVmch67SctIQ

Another message I reinforced this morning was relating to pupil behaviour on the way to and from school. I would appreciate your help in encouraging your child(ren) to follow rules and behave politely on their journeys, wearing masks in shops and on public transport and keeping to year group 'bubbles' – this will reduce the numbers we have to send home for isolation should further cases arise.

Finally, as ever do not hesitate to get in touch should you have any concerns or queries, and I will endeavour to keep you informed with any changes or developments as they happen.

Yours faithfully,



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