Dear Parents and Carers,

As the term draws to a close it is the perfect time to reflect on the most extraordinary of years.

March 23rd 2020 is a date we will never forget. LECA closed its doors for the vast majority of its students and sent staff home, only to appear once or twice a week on a rota. In the meantime, students logged on at home and checked their emails and navigated their way through links and websites and apps and so on and so on. Parents stepped up too, in ways they never thought they would have to. Suddenly they were parenting (hard enough on its own) working and now teaching. This would be a severe test! One measure of the human race, however, is the ability to adapt in the face of adversity and we have all done that in abundance this year. The human spirit has also been relentlessly tested this year and it is only with immense determination and resilience that we have come out the other side and are now looking at a far brighter 2021. It’s not over but the light in the tunnel is shining brightly thanks to the brilliance of the NHS and the scientists working tirelessly on the vaccines.

In the new term, with lockdown over, the vaccines being rolled out and rapid testing following, we have taken the decision to increase the bubbles back to year groups. This is a positive step forward for all of us and a move back towards a more normal school day. Students in 7, 8 and 9 will still be in year group zones but they will move within these zones and not be in the same teaching group all day. Groups have also been redesigned to support more students and we have also recruited strongly in areas such as Teaching Assistants and English. In addition, we’ve added staggered breaks - but without food service at the moment – and lunches can again be eaten inside as well as outside. One key difference is school start times and these are noted below. For Year 7 particularly this is a slightly earlier start but this will allow us to deliver crucial intervention sessions during tutor time. We project that this extra learning time will help close the reading and writing gaps that have naturally emerged after such a long period out of school. All other current systems (such as PE kits on PE days and face-coverings in communal areas) will remain in place for now.

**The first day for students will be Tuesday 5th January and learning will be delivered online for all student apart from key worker children and those considered vulnerable. It will be Week 1. A further letter regarding the staggered start and testing will follow today.**

**Start time End of Day**

Year 7 - 8.10am 14.55

Year 8 – 8.20am 15.00

Year 9 – 8.25am 15.05

Year 10 – 8.20am 15.00

Further positive changes for 2021 are:

1. The addition of an Alternative Curriculum Centre (ACC) managed by two newly appointed inclusion experts. This is to support students who, for whatever reason, struggle with the routines of a school day.
2. The rebrand and relaunch of the House system with 4 new, diverse figureheads chosen by the students to reflect the modern world in which we live.
3. The re-launch of the Prefect system to create student leaders across Years 9 and 10.
4. Re-launch of the library including a brand new online platform and cataloguing system.
5. The addition of INSPIRED awards and a new badge system to celebrate the achievement and commitment of our INSPIRED students in visual way. Look out for a new video to launch this coming very soon.
6. The addition of two new English teachers, a new science teacher and two new TAs to support our students even more.
7. Commitment to the Arts Mark Platinum – we aren’t happy with Gold!
8. Commitment to the Rainbow Flag Award.
9. Commitment to the Race Charter Mark.
10. Commitment to the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

We’re really excited by the year ahead. It will certainly not be without its challenges, especially in January, but together the staff, students, parents, governors and the Active Learning Trust will keep moving us forward and developing our Academy to become better all the time. We absolutely rely on your support and we thank you for your words of kindness and encouragement this year. It has not been easy but working together has made the task much more manageable. Thank you very much.

Finally I hope you all have a fantastic Christmas, albeit in slightly restricted conditions, and I look forward to working with you in a brighter, better 2021.

Scott Gaskins

Principal, LECA