6th November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you all managed to have a restful half term and spend some quality time together, albeit within the constraints of the current situation. The purpose of this letter is to provide you all with a school update at the start of this next term.

**Covid update**

Thank you for your patience and support before half term, particularly those parents who had their child/children’s learning disrupted either through a rota situation in Years 7-9, self-isolation due to close contact with positive cases, or teacher absence. Our staff attendance is back to almost a full complement this week and student attendance remains high despite the current situation: above 90%. We had two confirmed Covid cases reported to us over the holidays, which required no action from us, as they had been out of school for sufficient time to avoid the need to trace close contacts from lessons.

You may be aware that the Department for Education issued some very late guidance to schools on Wednesday afternoon, the day before new national restrictions were imposed. There is little in the document that changes our current practices; for example, there is guidance around the wearing of face masks, which we already had in place from September. Other key messages from the guidance to make you aware of:

**Visitors:** *“Settings should restrict all visits to the setting to those that are absolutely necessary."* For example, this applies to parents coming into school.

**Exams:** *“The Prime Minister and Education Secretary have been clear that exams will go ahead next summer, as they are the fairest and most accurate way to measure a pupil’s attainment. Pupils now have more time to prepare for their exams next year, as most AS, A levels and GCSEs will be held 3 weeks later to help address the disruption caused by the pandemic.”*

**Clinically vulnerable:** *"Staff and children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance."*

**Extremely clinically vulnerable:** *"Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend childcare or nursery during the period this advice is in place. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education or childcare. Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice."*

The expectation of course is that schools continue to remain open throughout the next 4 weeks of national restrictions. Our children need consistency, normality and high-quality face to face teaching and we will endeavour to provide this. Please continue to be patient with staff, who are working incredibly hard under intense pressure at present.

**Classroom expectations including uniform**

Your child may have mentioned to you this week that we have been clarifying expectations around classroom behaviour (entrance and exit protocols to lessons) as well as uniform in assemblies. They have also been reminded about what we expect them to embody each day: **kindness, positivity, honesty, determination, manners and ambition.**

I would like to clarify that students can agree with a teacher to wear a coat over their uniform in classrooms if they feel cold. We have, as you may expect, instructions for staff around adequate ventilation in classrooms which means that windows are open. As we approach the colder winter months, students will be permitted to keep coats on should they feel cold. However, students should not be wearing hoodies under their blazers. Can I also remind you that part of our uniform includes a black V-neck jumper (not a round necked sweatshirt jumper) that students can opt to wear under their blazer as an extra layer. If you would like any support with spare uniform, or winter coats, please get in touch with the school; we will always aim to help if we can.

**Year 7 Parents Evening phone calls**

Year 7 Parents should have received a School Comms message this week to explain that they will be receiving a phone call from tutors next week, to update them on how their child has settled in during the first half term. Please ensure we have up to date contact telephone numbers and let the school office know if these have changed.

**Year 11 Mock Exams**

A reminder that Year 11 mock exams are due to take place between T**hursday 19th November and Friday 4th December.** Students will be sitting mocks in all their subjects, including their options subjects. We are currently finalising the provisional exam timetable, but are expecting **core subjects** to be on the following dates:

* Thursday 19th November: Biology
* Monday 23rd November: English Language & Maths Paper 1
* Tuesday 24th November: Chemistry
* Thursday 26th November: English Literature & Physics
* Friday 27th November: Maths Paper 2

Year 11 have made an exceptional start to the year; the best that I have ever seen a Year 11 cohort make. They have completed two mock papers already on Tuesdays over the past few weeks and have been very impressive in their attitude and conduct towards these. They should be incredibly proud of their achievements so far; their commitment to attendance at Keep Up sessions after school (and at Action Tutoring for those involved); and should be going into these mock exams with confidence.

Thank you as always for your continued support and understanding. I have had several lovely emails from parents recently, which are always much appreciated and shared with staff to keep us going through these challenging times.

Yours faithfully,



Kelly Holbrook

Headteacher