



Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Dear Parents,

## Staffing Update - Long Term Absence Notification

Firstly, welcome back to a new year, a new term and a new decade. We trust you have had a restful family break and, like us, are raring to go with all the new opportunities ahead.

Christmas can be a difficult time for some families. If there is anything that you want to update us with from over the holidays, please don't hesitate to get in touch so that we can continue to support you and your children in our close partnership.

### Planning for staff absence

As you will know, from time to time we need to plan for staff absence. Where a staff absence is temporary, or the length of absence is not known, we will utilise short term supply staff. If an absence is longer than two weeks, we would ensure specialist supply staff. In these situations, it is not necessary or appropriate to share the details of short term staff absence, particularly if we are unsure as to the anticipated length of the absence.

If we are planning for a maternity leave, then this would be advertised as a short term contract and that information would be shared openly with you.

However, we now find ourselves in a position where we need to plan for a long term staff absence due to a health condition and subsequent treatment. So that we can share our plans for this, and to ensure there are no unhelpful rumours, we have decided to fully inform you of a long term absence that we are now managing.

### Mr Gwinnett absence

In the last few days of the autumn term Mr Gwinnett was diagnosed with bowel cancer. His consultants have reassured him that it is contained and fully treatable and we are confident that he will return, fully fit, hopefully by the end of the school year. Nonetheless we are very conscious that this may be upsetting news for a number of our students, so please could you support us in reassuring them that this type of cancer, when caught early (which this has been), responds very well to treatment.

### Plans for lesson cover

Mr Gwinnett's main responsibility now is to lead our teacher training. As such he only teaches a small number of classes. Our main priority is his Year 11 GCSE class and we have restructured the timetable so that Mrs Lyall, who is already our Head of History, will pick this class up.

In restructuring these timetables, this leaves a small number of Year 7 & 8 History classes that need to be covered. We did consider recruiting a part time supply teacher for this. We do, however, have some of our existing part

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time staff who are able to take on additional teaching. Although non-specialists, these are excellent teachers who know our students well and we simply can't be as confident in the 'unknown' that a supply teacher can bring.

Consequently, we have taken the decision to share these lessons across our existing staff, with detailed lesson planning and specialist input being provided by Mrs Lyall. As such, even though your child may not be taught by Mr Gwinnett, it may be that they have a timetable change to accommodate the impact of the changes elsewhere.

We hope that you can understand the logic of these choices and will work with us to support our staff to make the very best of the situation, at a time when they have also been upset by this news.

### **Additional support**

Today (Tuesday) our tutors will take their students through this letter so that they are fully aware.

Some of you may question the logic of being so open about this, particularly as it may cause upset. Essentially, when there is a long term absence the rumour mill can make things sound worse than they are, so we wanted to be transparent with everyone. Also, students and parents can become disgruntled at timetable changes that are not adequately explained. We can't always give the details, but in this instance Mr Gwinnett and ourselves felt that this was the best way to explain changes that, although not desirable, are the best solutions in this unavoidable situation.

If any of your sons/daughters are upset by this news, perhaps due to similar situations in your own families, please don't hesitate to let us know (if we don't already) so that we can put appropriate support in place.

### **Our best wishes and thanks**

In the meantime, we know you will want to join us in passing our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Mr Gwinnett. As a school, we would like to thank you in advance for your support and we look forward to a happy and healthy 2020 for all of our school community.

Yours sincerely,

*M Cunniffe*

Mr Cunniffe

Head of School