

COVID -19 Update from Mr Reynolds, Executive Principal, 4th December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We are now in December; a time when Christians recognise Advent as a period of preparation looking forward to the birth of the baby Jesus. Although many of us may not call ourselves Christians or recognise a particular faith, we still buy Advent calendars and enjoy the experience of the countdown to the festive season. Whether we have a faith or no faith, we can use this time to think of those in our community who are less well off than we are, particularly this year with the effects of COVID-19 hitting some of our families hard. It is with this in mind that we held our annual 'Christmas Jumper Day' yesterday encouraging students and staff to come into school in a seasonal jumper and rather than giving money, to give some items of food. As always, our students, with your help, have responded in an amazing way, more than doubling the amount of food we collected last year. It was truly humbling watching the students unpacking their bags and handing over their gifts of produce forming mounds of food on each table in their year group bubble. We will ensure every single item goes to a deserving family. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your incredible generosity.



Given everything our young people have gone through this year and that some will find Christmas difficult, **we are going to provide every student with a free Christmas lunch** one day during the last week of term.

This week, teachers have started the process of reviewing your child's learning and progress across this first term. In a normal Autumn Term, this would include formal assessments. However, we all know that it has been a school term like no other so instead the review of your child's learning is based on a range of different classwork and homework activities. These include extended writing pieces, mini tests and online quizzes.

You will receive a report at the start of January that will inform you of whether your child is meeting subject requirements and what their attitude to learning is like. Year 11 reports will also include whether your child is on track, or not, to achieve their target grade for their GCSEs. Year 13 parents received their reports this week in readiness for the Parents' Evening, which was held last night. The report included a current and predicted A' level grade and an attitude to learning score.

I would like to say a huge 'thank you' to all parents and carers who completed the recent questionnaire – we had 456 responses. Rather than try to summarise the results here, I will upload the set question responses to the website for you all to see. You will notice that many of the responses were extremely positive – thank you for your support, it does mean a lot to us. The free text comment box at the end contained a range of responses. We will endeavour to work our way through the responses where you have raised concerns as we have your details. However, as always, if you have a question or issue just get in touch with us.

I am sure many of you will have seen the announcement made by Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, yesterday around A' level, GCSE and vocational examinations next summer:

"Students sitting exams and other assessments next year will benefit from a package of exceptional measures to make them as fair as possible and manage the disruption caused by Covid-19."

"In recognition of the challenges faced by students this year, grades will be more generous, students will be given advance notice of some topic areas, and steps will be taken to ensure every student receives a grade, even if they miss a paper due to self-isolation or illness."

"The Government has been clear that exams are the fairest way to judge a student's performance and has made keeping schools and colleges open a national priority throughout the pandemic in order to minimise disruption to education."

We are assured there is more detail to follow but I can tell you we will work very hard to ensure your child is fully prepared for their exams next summer, including looking after their wellbeing and keeping an eye on their stress levels. If I get further clarification I will let you know. In the questionnaire many of you thought that resuming full Ofsted inspections next term was unwise – the government clearly agree. Graded Ofsted inspections will not resume until the Summer Term.

Finally, two quick reminders: we are now asking students to bring in their own basic equipment (pen, pencil and ruler) and as the colder weather begins to move in could I ask you to ensure your child is suitably dressed (in appropriate uniform), not just for getting to and from school but also whilst in the building as we have to keep the windows of classrooms open for ventilation.

Best wishes
Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal