



August 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

Summer Holiday Update (1): 'Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success' (Henry Ford)

It's been a stressful week for school staff, parents and students. If you have been following the news, you will know about the fiasco over A' levels and GCSEs, with the government and Ofqual changing their mind several times about the way that grades were to be awarded this year. As a parent who went through a fairly stressful day last week collecting my son's level 3 BTEC award in Computing (which is now being regraded in time for next week), all of my sympathies have been with the Year 11s and their families.

On Thursday 20th August, the Year 11 students came back to collect their GCSE results (BTEC results have been delayed until next week). Like everything else this year, this results day was very different to every other one I have been associated with: students had time slots to collect their results; and we all kept a respectful distance from each other. But the anxiety and (mostly) joy on the students' faces was exactly the same as every other results day I've attended. It might have been different to the school staff but it meant just as much to the students who are now able to go to college to study an exciting array of qualifications.

We are not reporting GCSE results this year. Not because they are poor- overall, it is the best set of outcomes that the school has ever achieved- but because the focus this year, more than any other year, should be on the students. When schools were closed down on Friday 20th March, the Year 11 students were left in limbo for a few weeks before it was confirmed that there would be no GCSE examinations. I am sure that a few students were privately relieved that they wouldn't have to sit exams but the majority feel cheated that they didn't have the opportunity to prove themselves after four-and-a-half years of hard work. The final decision by the government to give Year 11 students the higher grade of the centre-assessed grade or the grade generated by the Ofqual algorithm was undoubtedly the right one. It is the least they deserve for months of uncertainty. Congratulations to all of them!

We have less than two weeks until the start of the new academic year but there has been plenty of work taking place at school over the past month. We have put a one-way system into place throughout the school, inside and outside, to help keep students distanced during lesson changeovers and when they are moving around the school site.

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I admit there's nothing subtle about them but I hope you'll agree that there's no chance the children will misunderstand the message we are trying to convey. We have also established separate catering outlets for each year group, with designated areas of the school where students can spend break and lunchtime. This will help us keep all of the students in separate 'bubbles' to help reduce the chances of infection.

Over the summer, we have been in contact with the bus and train companies. I will write a separate letter next week with all of the relevant information that you will need. In short, the companies:

- Will require all students to wear a face covering
- Will have sanitizer for students to use
- Are encouraging students to remain in their year group bubbles if possible

I will also write next week to confirm the arrangements for the first week back. Last term, we sent you '10 Key Points for Parents' which I hope answers most (if not all) of your questions. If you do not have it, you can find it attached with this letter.

A few parents and students have emailed over the summer asking what the school's policy on face coverings will be. The government published updated guidance on 10th August, which we have incorporated into our plan for September 2020. The guidance remains clear that face coverings do not need to be worn by students as long as other precautions have been taken. In September, most rooms will be arranged in rows so that students are not face-to-face (there are a few where this is not practicable); internal doors/ windows will be open most of the time to improve ventilation (windows will obviously be shut when the weather dictates); surfaces in rooms will be sterilised between sessions, using sterilisers purchased by the school this summer; equipment will not be shared between groups without having been sterilised beforehand. I think we have made the classrooms as safe as we possibly can. Nonetheless, there will be a small number of students (who may have a medical condition or may be shielding family members at home) who may wish to wear face coverings during lessons, in the same way that there will be a small number of staff will be wearing visors when teaching lessons. If this is the case, please contact your child's Head of Year at the beginning of term so that we can work with you to strike

a balance between keeping things as normal as possible whilst ensuring that your children (or family members) remain safe.

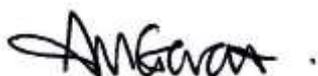
Finally, a reminder that we are having a phased return from Monday 07th September:

- Monday 07th September: Year 7
- Tuesday 08th September: Years 7 and 8
- Wednesday 09th September: Years 7 and 9
- Thursday 10th September: Years 7 and 11
- Friday 11th September: Years 7, 10 and 11
- Monday 14th September: All year groups back

This is so that we can run through the new expectations with each year group properly. There will be a programme of live lessons and online work for students to complete when they are not in school during this week and everything will be uploaded to Show My Homework by 5pm on Friday 04th September.

I hope that you enjoy the last two weeks of the summer holiday and I am looking forward to seeing all 1103 of your children in a few weeks. Please keep an eye out for additional emails next week or check the school's website for updated news.

Yours faithfully



Mr A Govan
Headteacher

If, at any time, you should require special arrangements to be made when visiting the school and/or in order to participate fully in supporting your child at school (e.g. an accessible venue for meetings, if you are a wheelchair user, assistance with translation of documents or enlarged copies of communications etc.), please do not hesitate to let us know.