

19th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

This week we opened our doors to some Year 10 and Year 12 students. It was an absolute delight and pleasure to welcome them back! Over 80% of students in both year groups have attended and have taken advantage of the face to face sessions with teachers.

Although we are a long way from normality, this week has felt like a very positive step in the right direction to returning to our usual vibrant community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their continued commitment and determination to offer excellent learning opportunities for our students. They continue to go above and beyond by adapting to the changes required of them. Can I also thank you as parents/carers for continuing to support the school and your child/children as I know home-schooling is not easy whilst also continuing to work and carry on with everyday life. I also know, as a result of the lockdown, many of my friends have commented that they could never be a teacher and how much they appreciate the work, patience and dedication that teachers and school staff have.

I have been in contact with parents/carers of Year 12 and Year 10 students who are waiting for an update regarding exams next year. At the moment no formal guidance has been shared, only speculation that they will continue as normal. It is my belief that the Government will be working on a strategy over the next few weeks and they will formalise their plans in September, although this has not yet been confirmed. It has also been announced that the Government will be providing additional “catch-up” funding for students, but again, this will be effective from September. We are all anticipating the plans for the new academic year, and as soon as I receive any more information I will, of course, share this with you. Our staff are already working hard behind the scenes in preparation for September and we will, as always, endeavour to offer as much support as possible when we return.

On Monday 15th June, the DfE updated their secondary guidance, and this can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-secondary-schools>

This guidance states again that face-to-face teaching will only be available to key worker/vulnerable students and on a rota basis for Year 10 and Year 12. However the guidance also now states that if schools can safely accommodate more students, they will allow individual meetings with all students who are not currently having face-to-face teaching. These meetings would consist of a face-to-face well-being discussion. I am awaiting more details as the current guidance is rather vague. As you are aware, from the beginning of this current situation, we have put in place well-being calls for all students. We were one of the first schools to do this and some schools have still not offered this service. We very much hope that this has helped over the past few weeks. However I will be in touch shortly to see which parents/students would like a meeting if and when this becomes possible. I am also looking into the possibility of introducing “live” lessons in September, if we are not able to be back to full capacity at that time.

As you are probably aware, there has been a lot of media coverage recently regarding Free School Meals provision during the summer holidays. Originally, the DfE had stated that they were not going to provide funding for this, and that schools and Trusts would need to find alternative funds and ways to support this. However, after the recent campaign by Premiership footballer Marcus Rashford, the Government and Prime Minister Boris Johnson have welcomed this contribution, and have now decided that a "Covid-19 summer school fund" will be set up to help vulnerable children and families during the holiday period. Therefore, children eligible for free school meals in term time in England will receive a six-week voucher to assist throughout this period. However, the academy will close for the summer holidays on 15th July 2020, and there will be no on-site provision for key worker students during this time.

We sincerely hope that this information will be helpful to you, and, as always, we are always here to listen and attend to any other concerns that you may have.

Stay safe and well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Baker', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Emma Baker
Principal