

Dear Parents / Carers

Firstly, can I remind everyone that this Friday is a Bank holiday, so we are not expecting any work to be done by your children on that day. Despite not attending school, many people have described how a change of routine at weekends has proven important in trying to retain some structure to the week, and recognising Bank holidays as days of rest from school work are just as important. Please enjoy it. Before then, can I draw your attention to a few things.

Year 8 'options'

At this time of year we would normally be introducing this to the current Year 8. Basically, we offer a limited opportunity to personalise each pupil's curriculum in Year 9, which we feel helps with GCSE options next year, and allows pupils to put more time into one or two subjects they really enjoy most. We will have to do this all by email this year it seems so please, if you have a Year 8 child, look out for communications from Mr Beale explaining everything. Our current Year 9 are the first to have experienced this, and we are really pleased with how it has gone so far!

Pupils' work and feedback from teachers

Please be reminded that we are really keen for the home schooling you are supporting to be manageable, and to not become a negative experience for all. Keep encouraging between 10-15 hours of work per week as a realistic target, and try to encourage the prioritisation of English and Maths if it is a struggle to get all subjects' work done. As teachers, we are finding this is to be a really challenging time, and certainly one which is not as efficient as we would like from a workload point of view. Without doubt, it is easier to teach a whole class face to face than a whole class remotely. Colleagues who have school aged children of their own are particularly busy. To make the job manageable, I have asked staff to prioritise years 10 & 12 for detailed feedback. If your child is in KS3, feedback will be less frequent, although we are looking and checking what has been submitted. So, please keep them going, and reassure them that their efforts are being noted by their teachers. Can I ask you to tell your children not to go into other pupils' work at all, as this has happened on occasions.

Phased return to school?

You will no doubt see in the media that a return some time later in the term is being suggested. It also seems likely, from what we are hearing, that this return will be phased in some way. At this point we really cannot say what shape this might take, and indeed I cannot quite see how social distancing will work effectively with any more than a relatively

small number of pupils in at any one time. I cannot imagine how any more than approximately 12 pupils on a coach will be able to stay two metres away from each other either, which for a school like ours will in itself present quite a challenge. However, at some point we will return, and once we know more we will make all the necessary arrangements needed. Education is important, and will resume in its normal way sooner rather than later I hope, but the physical, mental and economic health of our community is just as big a concern; I think we have to trust those above us to make the right decisions at the right time, and then focus on our own roles within the bigger picture.

GCSE and A level grades

As you know the onus has been placed almost entirely on schools to decide grades. Although we can do this, and will do so with complete integrity, it does place an unprecedented emotional burden on teachers in my opinion. This process is well under way. I want to thank you for respecting my request not to contact teachers querying your children's grades, as not one colleague has passed on a concern to me. Thank you.

Finally, can I say that if your family is struggling for whatever reason during this period, and you think the school can help in any way, please contact us and we will do whatever we can to help.

Yours sincerely

Tim Gibbs