

13 November 2020

Dear Parent/ carer

I wanted to write to you again at the end of the second week back after the half-term break.

Return to school

Students have returned to school well. There are so many great things going on around school despite the limitations and challenges created by Covid. For example, the history department produced a wonderful assembly for students in Y9 and Y10 for remembrance and then we held our whole school minute's silence on Wednesday morning. This was impeccably observed as we would expect but I felt somehow had added poignancy this year in the midst of lock-down. In any case, it is always a matter of pride to witness the entire student body, now 1300 strong, standing respectfully as one with staff and visitors in silent reflection for remembrance.

Extra-curricular programme

We have lots of extra-curricular activities running and lots of students getting involved and benefitting from them. They all take place in year group "bubbles" and under the same routines as the rest of the school day keeping the safety and well-being of everyone at the forefront.

Face coverings

We introduced the expectation for wearing a face covering in busy corridors and the government then made it a requirement. It is a nuisance and an inconvenience but I am pleased to report that almost all students now bring a covering or mask with them to school and are getting used to wearing it at appropriate times. A small number of students and staff are not wearing a face covering (eg for medical reasons). We are producing a "face covering exempt" badge and lanyard for anybody in this situation if they wish so they are not repeatedly asked to put a face covering on. This approach is working well – we have high and increasing levels of compliance and respect for individual circumstances.

Cooking

We have introduced the expectation of wearing a face covering into practical food technology lessons because in practice staff have found it especially difficult to maintain social distance at all times when a student needs help with an aspect of their cooking. This has reassured staff and been well received by students. Many

schools are not permitting practical food lessons which seems a great pity. We believe that it is really important that students can cook and the new arrangements permit this.

So far we have had only three students with a positive Covid test (one Y11 and two Y12 students from the same household). This required a small number of students to self-isolate and nobody within these groups subsequently tested positive. We continue to follow the Public Health England and NHS guidance. The school's procedures and approach received very positive feedback from our recent HMI inspection by The Health & Safety Executive (HSE). As part of that I will continue to keep you informed where we have cases as we move through the coming weeks.

Future planning

We continue to plan for a possible further full lock-down including school closure or for a situation when large numbers of students have to self-isolate at home. To this end staff and students are being trained to use Google Classroom as a more effective means of communicating and accessing remote teaching than our current methods. While we hope that this will not be necessary, were a situation to arise where we needed to move to large scale remote learning, we believe we will be better placed to do this well.

I continue to be delighted at the resilience and strength of students and the way staff are responding to the significant challenges of our times. This contributes to the very positive atmosphere around school.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Carroll', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim Carroll