

Our ref: PJS/DKP

14 September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I just wanted to drop you a quick message to report on the first week back and I have to say the students have been fantastic. Thank you so much for your support for the various changes that we've had to make in order to make the school safe but functional. We have really appreciated parents adapting their plans to take into account the staggered start and finish times.

Lessons have begun really strongly and I'm pleased to report that – despite media warnings – the behaviour has been really good. It's been nice to see students in class and around school behaving at the levels they were pre-lockdown, maybe even a little better and more concentrated in class. It is such a positive sign about how this school can be when the students have responded so well, even though they've been penned-in like never before. On a similar note the uniform is looking smart and great, with relatively few issues. I think the way a student wears their uniform reflects both their pride in the school and their commitment to education – again it's looking very promising.

It was a big test for us to see if the plans in theory worked in practice, and by-and-large they have. This has been as a result, in no small part, for how biddable and amenable the students have been. I have been really proud of how well they have adapted and run with the strange new systems. Inevitably there are a few glitches and we have one around supply of water because we've had to stop students using the water fountains for obvious reasons. We are looking into the issue and will come up with a solution very shortly, both for the short term hot day tomorrow and the longer term. Whilst it is helpful that parents highlight the issue could I please ask that people just give us a bit of time to work out the best and safest solution.

On a final Covid-19 note, you'll see there's been big debates about masks in corridors. The current government advice is to wear them if there's a local lockdown type situation. In many schools the students aren't in their bubbles in the corridors and therefore are suddenly exposed to a whole range of students. As we've zoned the school students will not routinely pass students from other bubbles in the corridors, so our system has already ruled out that risk entirely. Should we get to an upsurge in local cases then we reserve the right to ask students to wear masks in corridors, but I'd rather do that when it's meaningful and we can enforce it entirely rather than introduce it early and then it has no impact if we really need it. Of course students are welcome to wear masks if they are more comfortable and a number each day do that.

Over the holidays we have tried to improve the site for the students, and they seem to have appreciated it. As we can't have assemblies I made a short video for them on the first day outlining the changes, if you would like to see them for yourself the video is here <https://youtu.be/XpHcOiiK0MLINK> but please bear in mind the audience is the students and not parents!

We can't have a traditional Open Evening this year or parents' tours which is very frustrating because, as you can imagine, I'm dying to show off what the school is like at the moment. Thank you to everyone who has been talking up the school, it's really important that people recognise there has been change and it's going to keep getting better.

What has also been noticeable is the increased warmth and friendliness I've experienced from the students. I don't know if it's the cat videos, or just the fact that they know I am sticking around for a while but there is definitely a stronger sense of welcome and working together than I've felt here. It's really important because one of the main aims for this year is to increase the sense of belonging students have in the school and shortly we'll be surveying them about extra-curricular activities in the hope of offering a wide spread of them once we are out of our bubbles.

Finally, I hope you are able to join us at the Curriculum Information Evenings, they will be short and on Zoom but give you a chance to hear from some key people and maybe ask some questions. As with many things, we have never tried them online before so it might be a bit of a technological challenge for us all, but we thought it was worth a try.

Thank you once more for your support and I am really looking forward to seeing what this year brings.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Jenkins', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Jenkins
Headteacher