



10 September 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope you all had a great summer albeit one without a huge amount of sunshine (until we returned to school!).

The start of term and expectations

Firstly, a huge thank to all the parents (and this is almost everyone!!) who ensured that their son/daughter's uniform was perfect, and they were fully equipped with their 'Tools for Learning' and ready to go for the new school year. I gave assemblies to all five-year groups across Monday morning and emphasised the positives of the last 20 months but also made very clear our expectations for conduct both inside and outside the classroom. On Tuesday morning I walked the site with Miss Davies, our CEO, who was delighted at what she saw in terms of the teaching styles and content of the lessons along with engagement and progress of the students.

However, it is clear that a very small number of students haven't quite settled back into the school routines and expectations. After a long summer break this is often the case. We will be working closely with staff and parents to ensure there is a rapid improvement in one or two student's behaviours so the vast majority can make the progress they crave.

Testing, testing....

This week has been an incredibly busy one in all manner of ways. We began the week on Monday by Covid testing any student who had not previously been tested. (Unfortunately, this did result in one positive case but through the NHS Test and Trace system no contacts have subsequently tested positive). We then tested most students for the second time on Tuesday morning. I can only applaud the positive 'can do' attitude of my testing team who despite the pressures of the start of the school year have been able to put many hours of time into this process and have done so with a smile and positivity.

Photos

On Thursday we had our school photographs, and the photographer was full of praise for our students and how smart they looked and their polite manners. He reported that this was in contrast to other local schools he'd visited this week. This was really pleasing and is borne out by how smart the students look as they walk around the school site. These photos will be coming home in the next few days.

Examination appeals

We were also delighted when the examination result appeal window closed last weekend. There have been no appeals from any of our students regarding their results. I know this isn't the case at many schools, but I hope this reflects the clear communication of our processes and assessment procedures that led to a very fair set of grades that also passed all the checks and balances of the Joint Council of Qualifications.

Clubs

I am delighted that our student clubs start again next week with lunchtime and afterschool activities. I am hoping there is something for everyone but please do encourage your sons/daughters to get involved. Please have a look at the student newsletter for details.

Parent welcome meetings

We held four of our Parent Welcome meetings this week with Year 10 and 11 on Wednesday and Year 8 and 9 on Thursday. These meetings went through our expectations for the year and how parents can support their sons and daughters to progress. For those parents that couldn't make it an abbreviated version of the presentation will be sent out next week. The meetings were also a great chance to see parents in the flesh. Although I have been headteacher for nearly 2 years there are many parents I have never met face to face due to the pandemic and it was good to put parents faces to children and also to garner views on how things are going. Our next meeting is for Year 7 parents on Thursday September 23 at 6pm.

Buses


I have noted that the buses have been very busy in the last week, particularly the 83. I have also been upset that there has been some poor behaviour this morning on the 84 focused on one particular student. I have arranged a meeting with Reading Buses to focus on the issues of crowding and how they deal with and report any conduct issues to us. As a school we endeavour to deal with issues as soon as they occur, and we have some ideas on how to improve things that we will implement in the next week but if any parent has any constructive suggestions, I would love to hear them.

Stars of the week

I will re-start my stars of the week next week. However, I have loved our new Year 7 students and their great attitude across the week. Their positive smiles and hard work have shone through every time I've walked around the school. I've also been very pleased with Year 11 who seemed to have started the year with real energy and determination which is very pleasing and bodes well for their campaign towards GCSE.

Please click on the links below to share your FAB/DRAB views and nominate a staff member of the week.

Have a great weekend and stay safe.



Andy Hartley
Headteacher

