

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we come to the end of this half term I wanted to write and thank you all for everything you have done over the past weeks to support your children and the school. Obviously this way of working is not how any of us want things to be, but with the health and safety of your children absolutely paramount, having your children stay at home has been essential. We are aware of the challenges this has presented for some of you that have had to invest time helping your children with their learning, and I would like to thank you for what you have been doing.

As Mrs Heath explained in her recent letter it seems clear now that students from Years 7, 8 and 9 won't have the opportunity to return to school this term. As part of our commitment to students we are keen that they still feel a part of the school and to that end, after half term there will be a whole range of events and activities for them to get involved with, that will hopefully help foster that sense of community and belonging that can easily be eroded when you are physically apart from others. This will include House Competitions, as well as music, sports and other events for students to join in with. They will be rolled out across the coming weeks and more information will follow in due course.

Also, so that students have a clear focus for their learning after next week's break we will be holding a Learning Review Week towards the end of the term in which students will have the opportunity to showcase some of their best work from this period. This Review will also provide valuable information for the staff that will be teaching your children next year, giving a sense of how they have been getting on and where they need to pick things up from in September. To be clear this won't be an exam or assessment week but rather a means to celebrate each student's efforts.

A handful of you have enquired about the possibility of us running regular video lessons with students after half term. This is something that we have given a lot of thought to and whilst some staff have been using them, we have decided not to roll them out across the whole school for a number of reasons. Some of this is to do with the limited access to IT that many families have. Around 200 students have no access (no IT resources or no internet access), or very limited access as they are sharing a single device between a number of adults and children. As a result, we are providing paper-based resources to a substantial number of students and many of these would be left out of any video classes that might run – typically only around 50% have been able to take part in the lessons that have been trialled. Similarly, some staff members live in areas with limited internet, and a number have their own young families with them whilst they are working from home which makes video calls difficult. This, combined with everything else we are asking staff to do in addition to their teaching, such as supporting children of key workers and our more vulnerable students, as well as keeping in regular contact with their tutees, have led us to decide not to pursue video lessons at this time. Whilst I know that some of you will be disappointed about this, I hope that you will understand that it is a reasoned decision, and not something that we have dismissed lightly.

Finally, we would encourage all students over the next week to have a proper break and recharge their batteries. The staff have put together a short message for all the students which I hope they have now received. The message is meant by all of us, and we hope they enjoy it.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



A R Blackburn (Mr)
Headteacher