

Our Ref: DWt/LPu

7th May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

One day less this week but it has felt as busy as ever, a great deal going on and I am always impressed by our youngsters. I have been showing around various visitors over the last couple of weeks and all have commented how calm and focused our youngsters are, never a surprise to me but always great to get an outside perspective on how we are doing.

COVID-19 update

We managed this week to issue all youngsters with additional home testing kits, staff as well. We were a little concerned as the staff kits only arrived on Tuesday, we were expecting them some time ago, but better late than never. If anyone was not able to pick up any test then they should go to Pupil Services.

I am still amazed that we have not had any reported cases as yet since Easter, again a matter of time I feel sure. This is more than can be said for my wife's school as she unfortunately has to isolate for ten days herself due to a case in her bubble. Also many at my eldest daughter's school have had to isolate due to cases. It is still out there and we must still remain cautious and keep testing. If you could please keep reminding all to bring a plain face-covering to school that would be great. We are dealing with those who constantly turn up without one but it is proving quite costly and tiresome to be honest.

Talk again this week of certain scientists recommending that face-coverings should continue to be worn beyond May 17th, but nothing official yet so we will see. There are a couple of weeks between now and then and I feel sure more details will emerge in due course which I will share.

PPEs and Teacher Assessed Grades

A reminder of the following as I am still receiving emails wondering about PPEs and the wearing of P.E kit. Year 11 PPEs run from Tuesday 4th May until Friday 14th May. They will be followed by a week of Year 10 PPEs, from 14th May to 21st May.

Due to the PPEs running from 4th May until 21st May, our youngsters will need to wear PE kit to school on the days that they have PE. We are seeing a great deal in tracksuits that aren't anything to do with our P.E kit and your support here would be much appreciated.

Year 9 Parents' Evening

Every parents evening is incredibly important as it is our chance to share with you how everything is going. A really meaningful discussion about progress and attitude where you get the chance to hear what is being covered in lessons, your youngster's reaction to them and what can be done to further improve.

Thank you to all those that attended, I know you get a great deal out of these evenings and our relationship with you is hugely important. A little different doing it remotely but no less important.

Summer School

You may well be aware that the government is looking to do what it can to get all youngsters caught up with any missed learning. In my opinion quite a lot of what has been discussed comes across as quick-fixes and we will always go with what works and what has been proven to have the biggest impact. I am not a short-term or quick-fix person and I don't do gimmicks. As I have said before in previous letters it comes down to consistently good teaching, relevant feedback which is acted upon in the right way and with peer support, these things all make a big difference.

One thing we will take advantage of is the Summer School. This will be voluntary and is only for our current Year 7, one week only, and our new intake, again for a week. These two groups because that is what the government have told us any funding will be for. It is very much in the embryonic stage as funding was only confirmed last week. We will have as many as we can accommodate from our current Year 7 with us for the first week of the summer holidays, then our new intake in the second week.

Of course, the theme throughout both weeks will be linked to Aspiration Resilience Opportunity Excellence (AROE), our ethos, with a real focus on raising aspirations and shooting for the stars. I would like it to be an opportunity for our youngsters to really see the best of us and get to know us a little more and what we can offer. It has been quite a disrupted and somewhat unique year where our Year 7s have perhaps missed out a little on what it really means to be part of Woodlands, this should hopefully let them know a little more of what we are about. More details will follow shortly, and it is just another thing to look forward to.

Awards Evenings

There will be a slight change to the format here. It is really important that we celebrate what has been achieved by our youngsters this academic year, quite a challenge for all and this needs to be recognised. A provisional date for the Lower School (Years 7 and 8) is 23rd June at 6.30pm, Upper School (Years 9 and 10) will be the next day 24th June also a 6.30pm start to take place in the Performance Hall and Atrium. You will notice no Year 11 as we will not know any GCSE results as yet and we normally celebrate their achievements in the autumn term. These two evenings will be less formal affairs, with the aim of awarding more, each subject for the lower and upper school, with a real community feel. Music in the background, drinks, photos and really talking about what has been achieved by our youngsters. Not a sit down event but a chance to reflect and get our community back into the building and you getting to know us a little more and what we are trying to achieve.

There will then be an AROE Awards Evening on 1st July starting at 8.30pm start. This will be more traditional and held in the Activity Studio and limited to just forty of our youngsters. This will be a sit down event and a real chance to say more on what each of our winners has achieved and why we are so proud of them.

It is hoped that restrictions will be lifted by then, hence the dates, but we will still need to be cautious in our planning and use common sense with these celebrations. More detail to follow.

Moving forward

I like to think that I am quite a good listener. Believe it or not, I don't really have much to say and I am always at my happiest when listening to others rather than being in the spotlight and having others listen to me. I am not a great letter writer either, but I have got better as I have been writing



to you every week for 14 months now. Listening to other's views has always fascinated me, you can learn a lot from what someone says and doesn't say, as well as how they say it. My Dad used to tell me that *'It would be boring if we were all the same'* so always good to take it all in.

Listening is important and so is acting on what you are being told. Not all the time and it is no good being reactive and not moving forward with a clear vision as this leads to confusion. I would very much like your opinions on what has worked well over with the COVID changes we have had to put in place and what we should be keeping come September. I have asked staff and we will be asking our youngsters as well. For example, I am quite keen on keeping the one-way system as it is a real break between lessons with some exercise as an added bonus. Having break and lunch outside has always worked very well as there is no overcrowding in the atrium. You may well have opinions on the outside bubbles and remote parents' evenings and anything else that we have put in place. It will not be a case of me pleasing everyone as decisions will be made in the best interests of the school having taken all into account, but I am listening. All feedback to me by half term please so we can put plans in place ready for September.

Best wishes,

Mr David Wright
Head Teacher