



23rd October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: School Half Term Update

We have got to the end of the first half term in these strange times, and we wanted to let you know how positive it has been for us as a school community. Students have risen to the challenge of adapting to the new routines and regulations and are understanding of the need for them. We cannot thank parents and carers enough for supporting students to have face masks and equipment, having patience with traffic and parking and bearing with us while we become better at remote learning. Indeed, what has been confirmed through this period, is the importance of schools and school communities as places of humanity, togetherness and friendship and how vital learning and education is for our students and their futures.

Health and safety

Throughout this half term, the safety of our school community has been paramount in our minds and that will continue. We have only had two positive cases amongst students with minimal impact on those having to self-isolate (only 14), and no cases within the staff team. Of all the measures we are taking, we feel that mask wearing and ventilation (including students being outside as much as possible) are helping.

With the winter weather starting to set in please make sure that students have lots of layers, a school jumper, a good coat with a hood, an umbrella, gloves and woollen hats. It is really important to wrap up well when we have to keep windows and doors open and spend more time outside.

During half term we will be painting road markings on the drive where the orange barriers are currently, to mark out pick up and drop off points for students. We hope that this will help make the traffic flow a bit more smoothly and ensure safety for all. Please do encourage your child to walk or cycle where possible, but if driving only use the drop off and pick up zone and continue to take care on the drive as the darker mornings draw in.

Remote learning and contingency plans

Over the past few weeks, we have been experimenting with providing live lessons via Google Classrooms for students who have been absent from school for any reason. Staff have been learning how to teach lessons in-school and to students at home, at the same time. This is actually quite a complex task, but we are growing in confidence and feel that the direct contact with the teacher, whilst not always perfect due to technical difficulties, is really important in making remote learning more enjoyable and effective.

When accessing a live lesson from home, students need to remember to wear headphones if they are in a shared space. This allows the teachers to be confident that they are teaching students directly, rather than parents and carers, and ensures a professional learning environment is maintained.

We would also like to reassure you that we have a 'live lesson' timetable ready to go if schools are required to close at all. This would be communicated through our electronic systems and Google Classrooms, if necessary, as we have done previously. At the time of writing it is our understanding that schools will be **open as usual after a one week half term; students return to school on Tuesday 3rd November**. However, we can take some confidence in the fact that we feel prepared for every eventuality.

Just a reminder that we have recently contacted you about our new parent communication app **Classcharts**. Please do download it and log in, as it is a really quick and easy way to keep track of your child's attendance and behaviour record on a daily basis. We are also planning to send letters and other announcements through the app as more parents have access. The other software package that we are using to support our blended learning and assessment is **GCSEPod**. Parents and carers of students in years 9, 10 and 11 should have received a letter and a link to a really useful parent guide. Please do contact us at enquiries@biddenham.beds.sch.uk with any questions you may have. As ever, all feedback is gratefully received.

The first day back for students after half term is **Tuesday 3rd November**. We would also like to give you advance notice for after the Christmas break, that students return on **Tuesday 5th January**, after an additional staff training day on the Monday.

There have been many achievements this half term - year 7s have been settled into school well, the rest of our students have got back into learning, year 9s have chosen their options and started new timetables and we have done our first ever 'virtual' open evening - to name but a few. There is a great deal to be proud of and even in uncertain times, a lot to look forward to.

We hope that all students and families have the chance to rest and recharge over the half term break, ready to start the next half term with renewed energy. We cannot thank you enough for your support, help and encouragement. Please continue to be extra cautious and vigilant and resist complacency as we all support each other to ensure we keep the school open. Take the very best of care of yourselves and your families.

Warm regards,



Mr D Bailey
Principal



Ms E Grylls
Head of School