

WEEK 39 - Friday 23 July 2021

You can't run a school without _____

And the magic of Hessle High School is that you could name anyone in that sentence and it would be true. This year, more than ever before, we have seen how vital every single person is when it comes to making a school work and every single one of them deserves huge thanks for their work.

Thanks to our cleaners who have kept us safe, working extra hours and doubly hard to ensure that rooms and spaces are sanitised, cleaning stations replenished and every single surface wiped to within an inch of its life!

Thanks to our caretakers for also keeping us safe, moving tables, chairs, barriers, and heaven and earth to repurpose our spaces into safe bubbles, pop up canteens, temporary playgrounds and even a Covid testing centre. Nothing is ever too much trouble. They look after us, so we can focus on looking after the children.

Thanks to our teachers for putting themselves on the front line. When many workers do their jobs behind perspex screens, our teachers have continued to work in classrooms with thirty plus children. And when students have been sent home, they've reinvented themselves online or, even more incredibly, taught online and face to face at the same time which is even more difficult than it sounds.

Thanks to our student services team who have dealt with every possible human emotion in the past sixteen months, from students, parents and colleagues. I am in awe of the way in which they do this work day in and day out, never letting anything or anybody affect their professional commitment to support the wellbeing of children. They are heroes, in my book.

Thanks to our back office staff who have made the operation work - communicating with parents, handling the Covid information in and out of school, dealing with Covid cases, real or imagined, producing packs of work at no notice for students to do at home. Whatever has been thrown at them, and everything has, they have risen to the challenge and just done it.

Thanks to our wider support staff, our teaching assistants, our safeguarding team, careers leaders, behaviour managers and personal development team. Every single one of them has played their part in supporting the students when they've been most vulnerable, anxious or confused.

Thanks to our exams and data team for not only doing their normal work, but also taking on the work of an examination board this year - a logistical effort most of us won't even realise, and that is because they just got on with it with quiet and modest efficiency. Their office is an oasis of calm and the place where you will find the nicest of people. And the best biscuits.

Thanks to the middle leaders, the Heads of Department and their deputies and assistants. We start each year with a planned curriculum and their job is to make sure that it is taught well. But this year, that plan has had to change almost each half term as we have adjusted to the demands of teaching online, blended learning and so on. What they have done to support their staff, both professionally and personally, is remarkable and they have shown themselves to be remarkable leaders of people.

Thanks to our catering team for turning their operation upside down to provide a meal service despite reduced staff, stock shortages and trying to operate social distancing in a confined kitchen. And yet still managing to produce sausage rolls that beat Greggs! And to our lunchtime supervisors for keeping order and helping students to enjoy a calm and pleasant lunch.

Thanks to our ICT team who, in particular, kept us all together during each and every lockdown. As the expectations grew for us to be meeting and then teaching online, so their work grew to make that happen. We have moved forward several years tech-wise and these guys have helped us with every step.

And finally, just because this is most personal to me, thank you to Sarah Greenley, our Operations Manager and to our Senior Leadership Team. The work that they have done, often deep into the night and over weekends, to keep the school open and as safe as it can be, to keep the staff going, to keep me going, is well, I have run out of superlatives. I am incredibly proud of them.

Throughout this pandemic, there have been lots of heroes. The NHS staff, obviously, but many others in transport, logistics and public servants everywhere; but no group has worked harder, more flexibly and more importantly than those in schools. I feel privileged to lead your school and proud of the incredible human beings that I work with every day.

Finally, thank you to you and your families. I know that this year has presented significant challenges for every household in the country and I am acutely aware of the difficulties presented by home schooling and sudden self-isolation. Despite this, your continuing support has kept us going and has ensured that we can all focus on the thing we have in common; an unbending commitment to ensuring that our young people develop into the people we wish them to be.

Thank you. And have a lovely summer.

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 38 - Friday 16 July 2021

This has been a hugely difficult week in school. Like most schools in the country, we are currently dealing with a surge in positive Covid cases, the like of which we haven't seen since last November, just before the second (mini) lockdown. Each positive case takes a huge amount of time to identify students, contact parents and ensure that all students are safely home, in addition to reporting details of each case to the local authority and Public Health. Each case then tends to lead to ripples of understandable anxiety as friends, classmates, staff, parents and other family members process the circumstances around the case, assess their own exposure to risk and then deal with the consequences of homeschooling, or blended teaching and learning. It is a situation that is all-too-familiar to students, parents, teachers and school leaders and I am sure none of us will forget what this has been like. But we will not miss it.

I am in awe at the way in which our school community has dealt, and continues to deal, with this. I know the intense frustration that parents feel. I have attempted (and not been very good at) home schooling and, even now, my son is isolating yet again and, in doing so, is missing out on his final weeks of Primary School. These never-have-the-chance-again moments are what is so heartbreaking about the impact of covid on young people. Sure, they are missing lessons and that is bad enough but the things I remember so vividly about school, and fortunately didn't have to miss, were the school trips, the end of term parties, the lazy days sitting on a school field chatting to my mates without a care in the world. It makes us all double determined to ensure that the time that our students spend in school is as richly rewarding, engaging, stimulating and enjoyable as we can possibly make it.

Which brings me (kind of) to curriculum. This week, I have completed a round of meetings with each of our Heads of Department looking at their curriculum plans for next year. These plans set out the topics, skills and bodies of knowledge that will be taught in each subject during the year and, as you would expect, they take a huge amount of time and consideration.

At Key Stage 4, these topics are broadly set by the examination boards but, in Years 7, 8 and 9, there is a great degree of flexibility for us to teach content that we feel our students need and which they will find engaging. This year, we have asked our Heads of Department to organise their teaching around a series of 'Big Questions' which enable the students to understand why they are learning what they are learning. These include, to take just a few examples, Year 7 students in Art will seek to answer 'Can Art ever be more beautiful than Nature?', in Music, they will enquire whether 'modern music is more important than historical music' and in French they will tackle the issue of where different languages come from and why we don't just speak one global language.

Students in Year 8 are asked in English 'How does power corrupt?' through a study of Orwell's *Animal Farm* and in Geography the question 'Can the Earth cope?' opens up a unit on the environmental impact of the modern economy. In Year 9, History students are asked 'How did the Holocaust happen?' and in French, students learn about French-speaking countries around the world, such as Haiti and Canada, rather than the traditional study of France. All of which, we fervently hope, will make the diet of learning as stimulating and interesting as we can make it. After a year of working in classrooms rather than laboratories and technology rooms, we believe our Key stage 3 students are hungry and ready for it.

Finally, we are reaching the final week of term and so let me offer a few reminders of our arrangements for next week and beyond.

Although, nationally, 'lockdown' is all but over from Monday 19 July, in school we are carrying on as before with students working in bubbles and wearing face coverings. There is still the requirement for students to isolate if they come into contact with a positive case and we will notify you if that is the case. Please continue to ask your child to do regular LFD tests and, if your child is positive or has any Covid symptoms, do not send them to school and let us know. From next Friday (23 July) responsibility for all test and trace will pass to the NHS so any cases will need to be reported to them. As for arrangements for September, please refer to the summer letter which was sent out this week which can be found [here](#) and I will provide any further summer updates in a letter to all parents on or around 13 August.

In the meantime, enjoy what looks to be a lovely weekend and stay safe.

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 37 - Friday 9 July 2021

Apparently there is a football match taking place this weekend which is of some significance and, as I write this blog, the students - and most of the staff - are incredibly excited. I am not much of a football fan, to be honest; I tend to prefer cricket or rugby league (black and white, by the way!). But, once in a while, the national team exceeds expectations and I find myself getting swept up in the excitement. And so I shall be watching with my family on Sunday night, hoping for a historic win. Only football has the global appeal to do this and to bring together almost the whole country in one shared purpose, or dream.

This particular occasion is, of course, extra special. Coming after 16 months of hardship and difficulty, it is giving the country something to truly care about and to enjoy especially since most of us have never seen an England team in a major final in our lifetimes. But, just as importantly, the team themselves are so easy to like and admire. Footballers tend to get a bad press from lots of people and there have definitely been times over the years when I have moaned about their rich lifestyles and, in lots of cases, their arrogant and entitled attitudes. But this group does seem different. And that attitude is personified in the manager and leader, Gareth Southgate. He really is an inspiration to anyone in leadership regardless of whether that is sport, business, education or otherwise. His humility, his honesty and his respect for others stands out during these troublesome times and we have spoken at length to our students about these qualities and how they can elevate an individual above their peers for all of the right reasons. For once, it has been great to share in the growth of the national team in a way that goes beyond football. I hope that you all enjoy the occasion on Sunday, regardless of the outcome.

Our Trust are currently working with the charity, Mind, and the Tigers Trust to develop a potential joint working partnership. It is envisaged that the partnership would allow each school access to a Mind Counsellor and a Tigers Trust member of staff for a day a week. For the project to move forward we need to obtain funding and are writing a bid. As part of the process, we need to gather views from students, parents and staff in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on mental health and well-being. It would be helpful to our bid if you could take a few moments to complete the survey which can be found [here](#). The deadline is 16 July. Many thanks for your support.

Finally, next week, I will be sending home my usual 'Summer Letter' which will wrap up a number of key bits of information regarding the new term. Please read it carefully and keep it to hand as a reference throughout the summer. As yet, I am not able to confirm the plans for the return of students to school in September although I am hopeful that this will be shared by the end of next week and this will also provide information on the testing that may be required at that time.

Have a lovely weekend.

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 36 - Friday 2 July 2021

Earlier this week, we sat down to finalise our plans for the usual phased return to school in September. No sooner had we done that than we received a letter from the DfE informing us that they want schools to "be prepared for all scenarios, including testing on return after summer holidays." Great.

It went on, "Given the uncertainties around the Covid situation we will face in the autumn, we want to help schools and colleges to be prepared for all scenarios, including testing on return after the summer holidays." And so the PPE and test kits have begun to arrive.

What hasn't arrived yet is any further guidance or information, such as: when are these tests to take place? How many are we expected to do? Will this replace the need for bubbles?

Despite it being blindingly obvious to everyone that these questions need to be answered, so far there has been no response from the Secretary of State or his department. With just fifteen working days to go before the end of term, we now face the real possibility of significant disruption to the start of the new term when it is essential we make a running start in order to help students get back into normal routines. Schools are good at logistics and problem-solving but we can only do that when we have the information we need to formulate our plans.

As a school, we will put together a number of plans so that we are prepared for whatever is thrown at us. For the time being, I can only confirm that students will return to school during the week commencing 6 September and that we hope as many students as possible will be able to return on the 7th. Once I know more about what we are expected to do, I will provide you with more information.

There has been some really productive discussion following the information I shared with you about uniforms last week. Students have engaged maturely with the information and have asked some very pertinent questions. We have made it clear that we are not actually changing our policy; we are making it more straightforward for students to comply with, and obtain the items needed to comply with, the policy. Given the enthusiastic response from students regarding this issue, I have committed to a student survey on school uniform next year. This will not bring into question whether we have uniform (that will not be changing) but will allow us to hear student views on some elements of it. I will keep you informed.

Today I have 'signed-off' on a number of capital improvements that will improve the facilities across the school with work taking place in the summer mainly. Two of our computer rooms will have new PCs installed as will many of our staff work rooms and offices, the Photography room will be equipped with air-conditioning, an external canopy will be erected around the leisure centre to provide shelter and a large office will be split into to provide more space for external agencies and specialist support for students and parents. This is in addition to substantial works at Penshurst which includes a new dining room roof and a new playground.

Yesterday was also our new staff induction day where we were delighted to bring together for the first time the new colleagues who will be teaching your children next year. There are seven new recruits in total across a range of subjects each bringing subject specialism and, in some cases, some extensive experience of working in outstanding schools in the area. These have been recruited, in the main, due to the rising number of students that we are

admitting. It is always great to see fresh ideas and new enthusiasm joining our team and I look forward to seeing them prosper in their new roles.

Have a lovely weekend.

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 35 - Friday 25 June 2021

I would like to use my blog this week to provide you with an insight into the processes taking place in school at the moment to ensure that students in Year 11 and 13 receive grades in the summer, in the absence of final exams.

Once the final decision was taken by the Secretary of State that exams would not be running, there was a long period of time before we were informed of what the alternative would be.

When that decision was made in the Spring, we then set about putting together our own in-school plan. This meant that we began to pull together all of the accumulated evidence that we had on each of our 180 students in Year 11 and 48 in Year 13, across all of their subjects. This gave us a start point from which we then planned a number of further assessments that would be carried out in school to ensure that all students had the opportunity to show what they had learned and what they could do.

These first assessments took place in March and the second assessments in May. These assessments were drawn in the main from past examination papers, although teachers have had to ensure that all of the content was suitable and had been fully taught across the various lockdowns. Once the students completed those assessments, all papers were marked by our teaching staff and thoroughly checked and moderated by Heads of Department. Once that was completed, all students were then awarded a grade for the work that they have completed in each subject and several meetings have taken place between senior leaders and teachers to ensure that these grades are fair and based on appropriate evidence.

Once graded, all of this information was then checked again and submitted to each of the examination boards - over 2000 individual grades in total.

This week, attention has turned to Quality Assurance as the examination boards have now asked for samples of student work in order to check that the grades we have submitted are fair and based on evidence. Samples have been selected at random and we have been asked to submit evidence for seven of our courses (GCSE and A Level combined). We were given a 48-hour window in which to provide this and I am delighted that this was submitted on time yesterday afternoon.

For now, that is the end of the process. A huge logistical effort by all of our teachers, Heads of Department and our examinations and admin teams which has never been done before and which, of course, is being replicated right across the country.

Students will get their results in August (10th for A Level and 12th for GCSE) and we will write to students with more information nearer the time. Of course, students will have the right to appeal but we hope that, due to the rigour of the process outlined above, the overwhelming majority of students will feel that the grades they have been awarded are just and fair. Again, I will share more information on this process in due course.

Finally, this week we have outlined our intentions around school uniform next year and have clarified the skirts and shoes that will be acceptable. Students have, by and large, taken this in their stride. The principle of fairness is high on the agenda for all young people, rightly, and many have commented that they don't mind changing what they wear providing that we 'pick up' those students that transgress. And that is our full intention. As ever, your support with high standards of uniform is hugely appreciated.

With just four weeks remaining of the term, there is much more to share with you so please continue to read these blogs and the other communications heading your way. I will also send the usual 'summer' letter which wraps up all of the key information that you need.

In the meantime, have a lovely weekend.

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 34 - Friday 18 June 2021

School uniform is one of the most contentious elements of day-to-day life in schools. Some students love it, most are fairly ambivalent about it and some - it is fair to say - loathe it with a passion.

I went to a comprehensive school in Hull and, midway through my time at the school, a new headteacher arrived who decided that the students needed to express their individuality and so he promptly scrapped the school uniform. As a result, at first, he was immensely popular with the students, although not with the staff. Gradually though, most students realised, myself very much included, that the day to day worry about what to wear was incredibly wearisome. A badly chosen pair of jeans could lead to weeks' worth of abuse from those with better dress sense and that was before 'trainer envy' and my longing for a pair of Adidas Kick that my parents couldn't afford and yet which everyone else seemed to be wearing. Such was the distraction caused by non-uniform, that standards quickly dropped and the school went into a steep decline thereafter, badly affecting the life chances of many hundreds of young people. The moral of the story? Uniform matters, and you don't mess around with it, unless it is to make it better!

My story may be an extreme one but we are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining high uniform standards. And the same goes for jewellery, make up and hair styles and colours. These things matter and, once they are allowed to slip, other things do too.

A few years ago, after taking over as Headteacher, I undertook a review of the cost of our school uniform. I wanted to be sure that it was affordable for all of your students and families and that there was sufficient choice around the core - i.e. shirts, trousers, skirts etc.

- that allowed people to buy from a supermarket or other provider, if they wished. At that time, I was content that the uniform was smart and affordable.

We have undertaken another review of uniform and, next week, I will inform you of a couple of minor changes that we are making to footwear and skirts which we believe will make the uniform even more consistent and smart, as well as potentially more affordable for some families. Please look out for a letter which should land in the middle of the week.

We are also currently putting the finishing touches to our summer school offer. This will comprise two weeks' worth of activities.

In week one (w/c 26 July), we will be inviting Year 6 pupils into school for a broad mix of activities designed to prepare them for the start of Secondary School in September. We have sent parents of those children a survey link to seek expressions of interest.

Our second week of activities will take place during w/c 9 August and will focus on some students in other year groups. Rather than inviting large cohorts into school, this will be led by individual class teachers running 'catch up' learning sessions for specific cohorts of students. Shortly, we will contact the students who we will be inviting into school for those sessions.

I must stress that attendance to these sessions is voluntary. Whilst I would hope that families would consider attending, I am aware that all of our school community - students and staff - need a good break after a tumultuous year. If your child is invited to attend, please discuss this together and make a decision that you feel is right for your family.

In the meantime, take care and continue to stay safe.

Take care and stay safe

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 33 - Friday 11 June 2021

I have always wondered why - as you get older - time seems to pass so much more quickly than it did when I was a young man. When I look back on the summers I spent as a teenager and a twentysomething, they seemed one long endless carefree period of enjoyment. They seemed to go on forever. When, in reality, the six weeks away from school, or couple of months away from university, were just that.

But now, the weeks fly by, the months disappear before I have even said 'white rabbits' and the years? Well, how is it already 2021?

I once read a book called 'A Death in the Family' by Karl Ove Knausgaard in which the author tried to explain this phenomenon of rapidly accelerating time and he attributed it to the type of experiences we encounter in our early or later years. Our youth is generally filled with new experiences, full of highs and lows, each of which, when we look back, are vivid in our

memory, giving the impression that those months and years were jam-packed with incident and, consequently, seemed to last a long time.

We then spend most of our adult lives repeating those experiences, usually in search of our youth, and trying to smooth out the ups and downs of life. But as our lives get filled with home, children, career, we don't have the time for the ups and downs and so we seek routines and predictable patterns. As a consequence, our day to day lives generally become better but much more predictable and, over time, each day, week and month becomes indistinct from the next. Well that is Karl's theory anyway but I tend to think it is probably true. But what has this got to do with school?

Managing routine is a key part of growing up as a teenager and is a crucial part of our work in school. Without predictable routines, school is chaos (there are 1200 teenagers here every day!) and not just for the staff. The main victims of chaos are the children, especially those that are most vulnerable or who have special educational needs. Our work is mostly around establishing systems and routines and making sure that they happen consistently every day. We work on our routines not in order to squeeze the individuality out of students or to quash their personalities but in order to create an environment that is safe, stable and within which their own creativity and that of their staff can flourish. Believe me the very best teaching always takes place in a classroom where the teacher is in total control, where the students know exactly what is expected of them and where there are no distractions around uniform, punctuality or behaviour. This is our goal.

Over the past fifteen months, we have introduced several new routines due to Covid and, without exception, we have been incredibly impressed with how the students have responded to them, whether it be face coverings, one way systems, bubbles or the tutor group line up. Each of these has been supported by our students for the benefit of themselves and others. We are very proud of them. As we move into the new Academic Year, we hope to relax some of these while maintaining others which have a demonstrable impact on the orderly environment of the school. In the coming weeks, I will use this blog to explain these to you and to gain your support as we continue to drive up standards in our school and make the place an environment in which students can flourish.

We hope that creating routines in school does not lead to time passing too quickly for our youngsters but that the opposite is the case; it allows the space for the truly great, lifelong memories to take place which they will never forget.

Take care and stay safe

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 32 - Friday 28 May 2021

Keeping children and young people safe in school is the most important responsibility that we hold as adults working in schools. Parents do care about exam results but mostly you want to know that your child is safe and that they will be taken care of during the day. You want to believe that your child is happy and is enjoying school, that they are making friends, sometimes new ones, and gaining an understanding of the differences between themselves

and others and learning to live amongst, and celebrate those differences. Importantly, you want to know that if something happens to your child, we will know about it and take care of them, and keep you informed along the way. You also want to know that we will find the talent in your child and find a way to nurture it. These, and much more besides, are the expectations that we place on ourselves every day.

In order to do that, we constantly review the way that we work and, being part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) offers us even more ways to review that work than if we were just a stand-alone Academy. This week, we welcomed some fellow leaders from our Trust to our school to undertake a Safeguarding Review. Over a day and a half at the High School and at Penshurst, they spoke to pupils, students and staff to ask about how we keep our learners safe; they observed our procedures at first-hand, reviewed documentation and discussed our systems with leaders. They watched student movement around the site in the morning, at lunch, at the end of the day and between lessons and they spoke to visitors, parents and contractors. The report that they have provided us with, I am pleased to say, found no concerns and indeed offers many positives and, in a number of areas, highlights some exceptional practice. As it should, it also suggests some ways that we can develop even further; these suggestions are based on the evidence that the team have found from studying other schools in our Trust. Likewise, some of the practice seen at Hessle and at Penshurst will also now be shared with other schools, to the benefit of all of our learners. This kind of collaboration across Academies is a really important benefit of the MAT structure and we are seeing gains from this on a regular basis.

Finally, we arrive at the end of yet another half term. I am delighted that we have managed to avoid any significant disruption caused by Covid since Easter. School is beginning to return to something more normal although we continue to keep the majority of our protective measures in place, such as bubbles and year group zones. We await the Government announcement about the next stage of the roadmap and will, as ever, communicate our response fully as soon as possible.

In the meantime, enjoy what promises to be a warm period whilst the children are on half-term and we look forward to welcoming them back to school on Monday 7 June.

Take care and stay safe

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 31 - Friday 21 May 2021

As you may be aware, The Department for Education has pledged £200m to fund summer schools during this year's summer break. This is designed to help to plug the gap in learning lost during Covid. Whilst the intention here is noble and the funding is thankfully substantial, the likely overall impact of such an initiative is debatable. As a school, we face the usual quandary of offering additional learning and enrichment opportunities to students in the full knowledge that the students most likely to attend are the ones least in need of the support. This is always the case with any scheme such as this.

Furthermore, I am not sure that 'summer school' is what the majority of students want. After fourteen months of hardship, I would rather that they spent the summer weeks enjoying friendships, family time and, hopefully, some UK holidays or short breaks.

Secondly, our staff also need a break. I know there will be some reading this who will roll your eyes at teachers complaining about workload when we get 'all those holidays'. I get it. I haven't always been a teacher and, before I came into education, I used to say the same myself. But the reality is that teaching is an intense occupation and without a proper break over the summer, teachers will be less equipped to come back in September to deliver the magic that you want from them. So I have to look after the workload of my staff.

Nevertheless, we have incredible creativity amongst our staff at Hessle High School and so we are currently consulting amongst our staff both on the needs of students and the best way to deliver some meaningful activities that will be engaging and enjoyable for all concerned. I will keep you posted.

I have written about Year 11 a great deal in recent weeks and I wish to finish this piece with more reflections on them.

Although they have spent today signing their shirts (and mine!) and saying their goodbyes, most will return to complete their assessments next week. As we get closer to the end of this cycle and the likelihood of disruption recedes, we have informed students that they may leave the site on Monday lunchtime (12.15) to study at home, unless they have an intervention session in the afternoon. If you are unsure whether this affects your child, please contact the school.

Finally, last year as the previous Year 11 cohort began to work from home after the first lockdown, I wrote to them and shared this;

"... keep yourselves safe and do everything that you can to support your families and those vulnerable people in your community. If I could wish one final thing for you it is this: when you look back, in years to come, at the unprecedented events of 2020, be proud of yourself for how you behaved, how you responded and what you did to help others."

Whilst that was the wish that I had for the 2020 cohort, I can say in all honesty that the cohort of 2021 - our current Year 11s - have also lived up to that expectation completely. From the moment they returned to school in September, through various lockdowns and isolation periods, they have shown resilience, maturity, common sense, stoicism and, perhaps most endearingly of all, really good humour. I thoroughly enjoy all of the time I have had the privilege of spending with them; they never fail to bring a smile to my face and it is a real joy to be their Headteacher. As we bid them a kind of farewell today, we know that we will miss the Class of '21 just a little bit more than usual and I will especially cherish my signed 'leavers' shirt'. Click here for the [photo](#).

Take care and stay safe

Mr V Groak

Headteacher

WEEK 30 - Friday 14 May 2021

As the country gradually reopens and inches its way back to normality, the Prime Minister made the announcement on Monday that students in Secondary Schools will no longer be required to wear face coverings in school unless local circumstances dictate otherwise. We have been awaiting clarification from our local Public Health teams and the East Riding Authority on this and we received the following guidance yesterday;

“In secondary schools, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff, visitors and pupils inside the building in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around corridors and communal areas).”

Along with our Trust partner schools and other schools across the area, we are adopting this guidance which means that;

- Students should continue to wear masks on school buses and public transport
- Students should continue to wear masks when moving around the corridors and in other communal spaces, such as the canteen (unless eating and drinking)
- Students will not have to wear masks in classrooms, with the exception of students in Years 11 and 13.

The reason for this exception is that students in these year groups are about to begin their final assessments in school from Monday. The next two weeks are crucial in terms of doing their very best in the assessments but also wishing to enjoy the final days with their friends and teachers. It would be terrible if a positive Covid case were to lead to a large number of students being asked to isolate. It would be bad for any year group but especially problematic for those two year groups. A positive case followed by isolation would lead to the cancellation of assessments and a potential delay to the leaving date for students. To minimise the risk of any of this, we will be requiring students in Years 11 and 13 to continue to wear face coverings inside classrooms and while doing assessments in the hall. Students have been informed of this in an Assembly this morning and I can tell you that they accepted this provision with understanding and maturity.

In addition, we have also informed Year 11 of their final leaving date. Providing that we have no delays to the upcoming final assessments, students will be able to leave school once they have completed all of their final assessments. This will be different for each student depending on the subjects that they study and their assessment timetables. Students have all been given copies of their timetables and now know when their final day will be. If any parent wishes to have that information confirmed by the school, please contact us.

Because of the staggered end for Year 11, we will be holding a final Leavers' Assembly for all of the year group on Friday 21 May (2pm). This will be an opportunity for students to sign shirts (a rite of passage!) and say farewell to one another. This will be held in the large canteen to ensure social distancing and ventilation.

At all other times up until their final assessment, students in Year 11 and 13 will be expected to attend school as normal and we will provide them with revision support.

In the meantime, many thanks for your ongoing support and I look forward to being able to share more information with you about our plans for the next Academic Year very soon.

Take care and stay safe

