



6th April 2022

Dear Parents,

Tomorrow marks the end of another longish term for students, with the Easter break coming a little later than we have seen in previous years. With many schools across the country already on their holidays, I am sure that everyone is ready for a couple of weeks off.

For the first time in three years, we have students preparing for external examinations, with both Year 11 and Year 13 gearing themselves up for a busy period of assessment next term. After two years where grades were determined by other means, I can sense that students everywhere are happy that they feel they have their destinies in their own hands; this, of course, will require some decent revision on their part, so for around 450 youngsters, there may not be quite the relaxation being enjoyed by the other 1200 in the school. However, even those taking exams must make time for other pursuits in their time off and ensure that they are refreshed for the final push when they return.

This is all happening against the backdrop of Covid, which still hasn't gone away. This past term has been a challenging one, with a significant number of schools needing to close to year groups for occasional days as their staffing levels plummeted. Our highest number of staff off due to Covid on any one day was 13, although the number absent on that day was actually higher due to other illnesses, staff needing to take time off to look after children who had Covid, or to mind younger children who were sent home because of issues in their school. I am pleased that we have been able to remain fully open throughout, despite the obvious pressures, and hope that with the change in policy around testing, the likelihood of more disruption will be minimised. Time will tell on that one. However, I would like to thank all of the staff here who have stepped in, stepped up, and done all that they can to ensure we have kept things as normal as possible for the students; it has made a big difference.

For those who don't know, access to free PCR tests and LFD tests stopped as of 1st April. We are no longer issuing LFD kits to staff or students. In the event that a student tests positive via an LFD that you have tucked away at home, the current guidance is to isolate for 3 days from the positive test or from the onset of symptoms, whichever is the earlier. The capacity to test is dwindling and for many, testing will not be available going forward. The advice is that we treat Covid as any respiratory illness: should students have a temperature, they are advised to stay at home until their temperature returns to normal, but otherwise, students should be in school if they feel well enough to do so. We are entering a new phase in the pandemic where we will be coming increasingly in contact with those who have the virus and, as a school, we simply have to adhere to the guidance that is laid down for us.

To more positive things, tomorrow night will see our annual awards evening highlighting the achievements of students during 2020/21...a long time to wait. The last time we had a similar event was in October 2019, so I am very much looking forward to celebrating with our students and their families and to hearing Sally Shaw MBE address the audience. We also have another high-quality evening of entertainment as we resurrect the Young Musician of the Year competition, with this year's event scheduled for Tuesday May 3rd starting at 7pm. Again, it will be lovely to see the hall

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alive with performers and their supporters – and anybody else who would like to come along to witness some excellent musicianship.

And continuing the theme of positivity, the recent non-uniform charity day was a great success. As I highlighted in the previous newsletter, this year's proceeds were split between Red Nose charities and the British Red Cross Ukraine appeal, with a grand total of £3300 raised by students through a whole variety of activities: a tremendous effort.

Finally, we are always keen to receive feedback on key areas of our work within the school. Over the years, we have done this through parent forums, consultation evenings, external surveys, direct contact and various other means. Below is a link to another survey, which we would be grateful if you would complete at some point over the next couple of weeks. We would hope for an honest appraisal, showing areas which are going well and also identifying what could be better, but it is important to us that we find out from you what the general picture is. The survey should be relatively quick to complete and will close at the end of the first day back, Monday 25th April.

[Parent Survey - Easter 2022](#)

Yours faithfully,

Neil Spurdell

Neil Spurdell
Headteacher