

Dear parents/carers,

I hope that you managed to have a relaxing half term break. Last half term was difficult as we struggled with staff absence in a way we hadn't previously. We had a lot of supply teachers in the building and our staff went above and beyond to cover for their colleagues. The students managed all of the disruption very well; thank you to you as well for bearing with us whilst we navigated those difficulties. Towards the end of the half term the situation was much improved so we are hopeful that this will continue and that we will have a much more settled half term.

Whilst we are not fully back to normal, it is great to see lots of positive things happening in the academy: rehearsals for our summer production of Matilda are well under way, it is brilliant to see lots of students taking advantage of enrichment opportunities and we are very close to being able to announce details for the Year 11 prom. It is also very pleasing that during such disrupted times our attendance figures continue to be above national average. Over the next couple of weeks the focus is very much on Year 11 and Year 13 mock examinations, providing the students with the opportunity to experience what the summer examinations will be like. Due to the disruption that students have faced over the past 2 years there have been extra measures put in place by examination boards. In some subjects there are less topics to revise, support materials will be provided for other subjects and all subjects have had advance information about topics that will be on the examinations. All of these measures, plus assurances that grading will be more generous than usual examination years is very encouraging and should allow for very focused revision enabling students to do themselves justice in the summer. The next 2 half terms are absolutely crucial for our Year 11 and Year 13 students.

During the half term break, the government updated the Covid guidance for schools. I have summarised these below but the changes for schools are minor in reality:

Twice-weekly testing

From 21 February, staff and pupils in mainstream secondary schools will not be expected to continue taking part in regular asymptomatic testing and should follow asymptomatic testing advice for the general population. In the event of an outbreak, a school may be advised by their local health team or director of public health to undertake testing for staff and students of secondary age and above for a period of time.

Anyone with symptoms of/testing positive for COVID-19

Whilst there is no longer a legal requirement for people with coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to self-isolate, if you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test result, the public health advice is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people. Therefore the guidance for staff and students has not changed. Anyone with COVID symptoms should stay home and take a PCR test (isolating until they get the result). Anyone with a positive test should be required to stay at home for ten days or until they test negative for two consecutive days from day five, whichever is the sooner.

Close contacts

Contacts are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and contact tracing has ended.

Thank you as always for your continued support of the academy. If you have any queries then please get in touch.

Lastly, there has been a change to the Head of Year team. Miss Jones has decided to take some time out of her Head of Year role to focus on her health. Miss Parkinson will be the Head of Year 9 for the rest of this academic year.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs R Coning
Headteacher