



14th March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Coronavirus Update 37

There are no important innovations to introduce this weekend, but I thought you may like to have a bulletin on the week just ended. It has been, after all, a return to school that would have been unimaginable only a year or so ago. It was only on Friday, with just under three weeks of the term left to run, that our testing schedule allowed us to have every year group back on site and in live classrooms. Just over 90% of our students had taken up the offer of lateral flow tests at the Leisure Centre or the bungalow. Two of them have returned positive results, one from Year 8 and the other from Year 12.

The testing programme will run on through next week. We have to offer three tests in all and at intervals of three to five days. This means that the steady traffic of students between the school and the Leisure Centre will continue until 19th March. These three tests will complete our contribution. The national programme expects that students will then go on to test themselves twice weekly at home. They will be bringing home the testing kits and instructions later this week.

I am pleased to report that attendance last week was very good. Over 95% of our students were on site, with Year 8 being especially well represented at 96.7%.

You have probably heard that there will be no conventional public exams this summer. Parents and carers with children in Years 11 and 13 already know, and in some detail, what will replace them, but a short summary of these arrangements may be of some wider interest. Subject by subject, the school will gather a dossier of work for each candidate. This will include at least one formal exam paper and several shorter assessments taken in class, all set to a timetable known in advance. Project or portfolio work already under way is also included. Assuming that the exam boards approve our scheme, all the work will be marked in the school, although not usually by the candidate's regular teacher. The exam boards then apply national standards to the school's marking and grades will be allocated. This seems to me to strike a fair balance between the unique circumstances facing the candidates and the need for standards that are nationally recognised.

The return to school, of course, does not mean a return to normality. Each year group continues to spend its school day within its zone; classrooms are laid out to reduce the risks of cross infection; face coverings are now worn within lessons. The need for considerate and responsible conduct remains, whether in or beyond the classroom.

The need to refresh and reinforce that message brings me to a wider issue, one that we had experienced during the weeks after we returned from the previous lockdown. The return to face-to-face lessons is a big step forward, but it does not mean that the school is once again functioning as a community. A school should not just be an effective means of conveying knowledge and developing skills. We aspire to be a community that represents the more admirable values from the world beyond our gate. Respectful treatment of our fellow citizens is a fundamental part of that; it is a quality that should be part of what makes life at school distinctive.

Essentially, however, the many pages of detail on our website come down to one simple message: treating others as we would wish to be treated. As the school is gradually allowed to reconnect in the ways that we used to take for granted, that central value will be ever more important.

To remind us all of this, we should look at the work of the Sixth Formers who pressed ahead with their annual Charities Week in the face of daunting practical difficulties. It is thanks to them that **£2035.50** will be donated to the Droitwich Food Bank. It is an example of what can be done.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Waters