

Friday 23rd October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

First Half Term Review

As we finish today for the half term week I wanted to write to you to express my gratitude to you for your support over the first half term of this unusual academic year. There have been challenges such as ensuring that our year group zones work for lessons and social times and the designated entrance and exit points are adhered to by our students, but in general our students have risen to the challenge very well. I am extremely grateful to the staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure that our new way of working is successful; teaching staff are no longer based in their own room and are moving around all of the time, but they have done so in a very positive manner for the sake of our school community.

It has been some weeks now since we had members of staff testing positive for Covid-19. All staff members concerned are well and back in school and we have had no further cases amongst the staff since then and no cases amongst our students so that brief period of challenge is well and truly behind us. I should like this opportunity to express my gratitude to you for the sensible and reasonable manner in which you accepted the news of our brief episode of Covid-19 cases and for the trust that you showed in us and the actions that we undertook at that time.

I am sure that everyone in our school community is looking forward to a break next week and I hope that students and staff are able to enjoy a well-earned rest. Due to the understandable level of anxiety being felt by some of our families back in August concerning the full reopening of our school we did not send home any students at the start of the term if they were not fully compliant with our uniform regulations. Now that everyone is well and truly settled in and have adapted so well to our new way of working it is time for us to reinforce some of our basic high expectations of our students and we aim to do so from Monday 2nd November when we return from the half term break.

Mobile phones must not be used on the school premises. Students should switch them off when they arrive at school before they enter the building and keep them switched off and stored away until they have left the school premises at the end of the day. Time at school should be devoted to their learning and during social times students should be giving each other their full attention because that is the respectful thing to do. Our students were excellent before lockdown with regards our rules on mobile phones and after the half term week we expect them to be so again.

A small number of students have slipped in terms of our uniform regulations and so I ask that they address any issues over the half term week as we will rigidly enforce our uniform regulations when we return on 2nd November and we reserve the right to send home any student that does not comply with them. Hair must be of a natural colour and must not be of an extreme style, by that we mean no shaved areas / patterns. The only jewellery permitted is a wristwatch and a single plain silver or gold stud (less than 5mm in diameter) worn in the ear lobe. Shoes should be black leather / leather look business style that can be polished. Notes from home regarding the wearing of trainers will be challenged unless backed up by a medical note. Hoodies and other similar garments are not allowed. As we head toward the winter months it is important that every student possess the regulation black v necked jumper and I ask families to use next week to ensure that this is the case.

In the grand scheme of things uniform transgressions at the time of a pandemic may seem trivial to some, but in my experience if we allow small matters to go overlooked and uniform standards to slip then we are heading towards an overall drop in standards across the board. We strive to be a high performing school with high expectations and smart uniform worn correctly is an intrinsic part of this endeavour.

We have always worked to be a school that our families can be proud to be associated with which is why behaviour in our wider community is very important to us. Our students can be our greatest ambassadors for our school when they are in the wider community and the vast majority of them are exactly that when they make their way to and from school. It is important that all students know that we will deal with any poor behaviour in our community in the same way as if the behaviour occurred on the school premises.

I have been impressed with the vast majority of students who have been kind and respectful to others by wearing a face mask when in communal areas of our school and I hope that this will continue after the half term week. The World Health Organisation is very clear when it states that the wearing of a face mask does not protect you from contracting the Coronavirus, but it helps prevent an infected person, who may have no symptoms, from spreading the virus. The wearing of a face mask in communal areas shows care and respect for others.

As I stated at the beginning of this letter our students and staff have been exceptionally good in the way that they have adapted to our new ways of working and I am grateful to them all.

I should like to end this letter with some really good news: congratulations are well and truly deserved by our Year 9 boys football team; not content with winning the 2019/20 U13 Sussex Schools FA County Cup by beating The Weald 5-0 in the final yesterday afternoon they are planning on entering the national competition. We all wish to say well done boys and good luck with the next competition!

On the subject of sports, given the success of this first half term and our Covid-19 control way of working we are exploring the possibility of resuming some of our extra-curricular programme when we return after the half term, with Covid-19 control measures in place naturally.

I hope that our students are able to enjoy some rest next week and return on Monday 2nd November fully charged for the next half term of this academic year.

Once again, I thank you for your continued support.

With my best wishes to you and your family

Yours faithfully

Philip Stack
Headteacher