



October 2020

Dear Families

First of all, I would like to thank you for all your support over the last term. This has been a challenging time for all schools, and we appreciate your trust and assistance in making sure that we have been able to keep the Academy a safe and positive place for the students.

The Year 7 students have settled in really well and we have been proud of the way they have worked with us and their behaviour, uniform and mature attitude around the Academy. Year 7 and Year 8 have astounded us with how well they have taken to our new Teams and Assignments software and some of their ICT work is outstanding. All students have been really good in working with us to keep the Academy Covid secure.

This half term has seen some great moments. Highlights include the Year 7 Plastics Focus Day where they constructed their own sea creatures out of recycled materials to raise awareness. In Year 8 we have run the Grand Designs theme and have had talks from Architects and Structural Engineers. We are proud of all the hard work that students have put in to record some amazing outcomes. We have recently introduced a new rewards system called epraise. Students collect House Points that they will be able to spend on a range of different prizes in the online shop. We are hoping to set up access so that families can have access via an app in the near future.

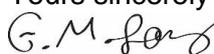
Outside the classroom, socially distanced football and netball trials have started. We have been able to undertake sessions from Birmingham Hippodrome where students will be putting together a short show to be broadcast to Primary Schools in the Trust. In Art we have been undertaking the Inktober Challenge with some fabulous work produced. We have had to be slow in opening up our clubs this year but more will come.

We also have seen fabulous progress on our new build: the pitch has been laid and seeded, the steelwork has been completed for the main block and sports hall and today we are seeing the construction of the roof and concreting of the floors.

Next half term we have lots planned. The introduction of Student Council as well as other roles such as Eco and Charity Representatives. We are having an incubator delivered so students can watch chicks hatch and grow. There will be a virtual castle trip, the introduction of student assemblies, Remembrance Day and a Festive Jumper Day in aid of Save the Children.

As we approach Christmas we will continue to review what we can offer in light of the national and local Covid situation. On the next pages you will find a series of notices and clarifications around things that staff, students and parents have raised over the first half term.

We thank you and all the students for working with us over the past 8 weeks and hope you have a great half term and look forward to welcoming you back on Monday 2nd November 2020.

Yours sincerely


George Faux
Principal



Student Journeys

As it is approaching winter, we would ask that students bring a winter coat with them to the Academy. We are continuing to line up students before school and at break and lunchtimes to make sure that students enter the building in an orderly fashion and sanitise their hands. Please remind students about the importance of road safety on the way to and from school as it begins to get dark. The gates for Year 8 open from 8:45, by which time all Year 7 students are in their forms. The Local Authority are looking at adding street lighting to the Academy back entrance which we hope will be installed in the next few weeks.

Masks

The Academy has provided over 1500 masks out to students this half term. While we have been happy to do this, it is an expense for the Academy and single use masks are bad for the environment. We would ask, please, can students please bring with them a reusable mask which should be plain with no patterns or logos.

Car Parking

One of the areas we have been looking to improve is the car parking. We have had lots of feedback from you on this issue with parents concerned over some of the ways students were running across the main car park and some of the ways people had driven the wrong way round it or come in through the exit gate.

We take this very seriously which is why, over the past few days we have tried to have a monitored area with two staff to ensure that students are crossing safely, only using the main car park when this area is full. Over half term we are bringing in a line marking company to try and improve the directions around the car park.

Car parking will be a difficult issue for us going forward. At the moment we have only half the drop off and pickup traffic due to the different start times of the different year groups and we still have three more year groups to add. If you do not wish to use the car park, there is also the option to drop students a short walk away or to use some of the bays outside of the Academy. We will continue to review this.

Homework

We have had a number of queries about how much homework students should receive. Our guidance is as follows though this may not be true every week due to events, trips, examinations etc:

- Students can expect to be set a minimum of 2 pieces of homework per week in L4L.
- Students can expect to be set one piece of homework per week for Maths, Science and Languages and English (Year 8).
- Students can expect to be set one piece of homework per fortnight for Art, Graphics and Music.



- Students may also receive Flipped Homework in a subject in addition to a piece of written work. This may involve watching a video, reading an article or commenting on an online Teams post before the lesson.
- Some subjects may set an extended piece of homework over several weeks or half a term.

Chewing Gum and Sweets

Last year the Academy was kept in excellent condition by the current Year 8. This year we are seeing for the first time some chewing gum. This is banned on site and any student found with chewing gum will be issued with a one hour detention. Likewise, we are noticing students arriving at the Academy with lots of sweets from visiting local shops and we would want to work in partnership with you in reminding them about healthy eating.

Social Media and E Safety

At the Academy we spend a lot of time dealing with the fallout of issues that happen on Social Media outside the Academy. This includes inappropriate language which at times is racist or abusive. People being unkind to each other, spreading rumours about each other and inviting to groups much older people from other schools or who are just unknown to them. Students whose behaviour is impeccable in the Academy are in some cases acting in a way they would never do onsite.

As well as the behaviour issues, upset children and other unpleasantness, some of the activity with unknown people is simply dangerous. If you would like an example of the dangers, I suggest watching Kayleigh's Love Story from Leicestershire Police on YouTube.

There are many guidelines and age limits on the most popular social media sites including WhatsApp being a 16 rating and all social media having rating of 13+. We have talked to the students about these issues and so have the Police but it is only in partnership with you that we can make a change and keep students safe.

At its heart you should have full access and awareness to what your children are doing and saying online and I have had some very difficult conversations with parents where we have shown them the online activity that their children have been engaged with. This includes listening in where students are online gaming where some of the language is appalling and again, is often with much older children or unknown adults.

Next term we will run an online E-Safety evening, like we did last year giving further information but I would encourage you strongly to insist on having access to your child's devices and regularly check their online activity. There is lots of information and support with e-safety on our website.

Family Forum

Finally, we will have an online Family Forum on the 11th November where you are welcome to join us to hear our plans and have an opportunity to raise any concerns and help shape the future of the Academy. The link to access this will be made available closer to the time.