

December 2020

Dear Students and Parents

This letter contains very important information about our arrangements for the final week of this term and our track and trace protocols for the first part of the Christmas holiday. **I must ask all parents to please read the information in this letter carefully.**

You may be aware from press reports this week that the DfE has advised schools that they may wish to use an INSET day at the end of the autumn term, making Friday 18th December a non-teaching day for staff training.

A number of parents, prior to this announcement, had contacted me to ask if the school could close early to reduce the risk of COVID infection or self-isolation over the Christmas period. Up until the point of announcement, our capacity to do this has been extremely limited, as it would require approval at a senior Local Authority level, for all schools.

Given this national announcement, we have considered our options carefully for the final week of this term. The following outlines the new arrangements.

Friday 18th December:

Following this most recent guidance from the DfE, we will transfer our summer training day to Friday 18th December. This means students will finish school at 2.00 pm on Thursday 17th December for the Christmas break. The Summer Training Day (Friday 2nd July) will therefore become a normal teaching day.

We appreciate the change in Training Days will not affect Yr.11 and Yr.13 students because the last exam is currently scheduled for Friday 2nd July. Therefore, to compensate for this, Yr.11 and Yr.13 students will be set work during their lessons next week to complete on Friday 18th December. This will be of a revision nature to help Yr.13 students continue to prepare for the Trial Exams starting on Monday 4th January and to help Yr.11 students build up their revision resources or consolidate prior learning for their Trial Exams following February half-term.

Staff will be in school on Friday 18th December taking part in a training day that would have taken place on Friday 2nd July.

This decision allows the school to perform the track and trace function in the first 3 days of the Christmas holiday without impinging on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. There is more about this process later in this letter.

I appreciate this is a late decision and apologise if this causes you any inconvenience. Unfortunately, despite significant pressure from schools and professional associations to release clarification to schools much earlier, this has regrettably been released at a very late stage by the Government.

I accept, like all decisions during these difficult times, it has the potential to please some but cause others to be less than happy.

Attendance – the final week of this term:

For many families, the upcoming Christmas holiday has even greater significance after such a challenging year.

I also recognise some may feel a degree of trepidation as there are understandable concerns about the possible need to self-isolate over the holiday period when arrangements have already been made to welcome or visit relatives.

To help us to support our whole school community, to ensure as many families as possible are able to relax and enjoy this special time of year, we require the following support from parents -

During the last week of term, students should only attend school if they are well in every regard. Students should not come in to school if they are feeling unwell in any way.

The same expectation applies to staff.

This will ensure the risk of students, staff and their families needing to self-isolate over the Christmas period are substantially reduced.

Please remember, it is important we all work together to safeguard everyone's Christmas.

Track and Trace over the Christmas holiday period:

Normally the Christmas holiday period is the only holiday when our school closes completely as this allows all students and staff to enjoy a well-deserved break with their families.

This year will be the exception, with myself, other members of the Leadership Team and office staff, in school on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd December from 8.00 am until 12 noon to carry out contact tracing, should we be notified of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

In the unfortunate event that your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is very important that we are informed that they are accessing a test, even if the result is yet unknown, as this will allow us to prepare the information required for contact tracing, in the event of a positive outcome. Ideally, we ask that you inform us of this on Monday 21st December, during the times highlighted above.

Please be aware that the school switchboard will not be staffed from 12.01 pm on Tuesday 22nd December until 7.15 am on Monday 4th January.

Conclusion:

Once again, I do apologise for the late notification of this change to our school calendar, however as I have previously outlined, this has been caused by a late decision by the DfE. I also understand this letter is more directive in nature than my usual communications, however I do hope it is received with an understanding of the very best intentions that are behind it.

It is therefore important to end this letter in a tone and with words I am more comfortable with:

I would like to wish all our students, our staff and their families a happy and safe Christmas. We continue to look forward to 2021 with renewed hope and aspiration for the better times that are ahead.

Yours faithfully



Steve Wilson
Headteacher