

27th August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of the summer break for schools I am writing to you to give you an update on school news over the summer period and remind you of how we intend to restart the school again next week.

Firstly, I'd like to thank the large number of staff who were active and working hard over the summer break to ensure that the site is safe for our return. As I've said on numerous occasions, it is obviously our ultimate priority to ensure that all students and staff are as safe as they can be at this challenging time. Even though some of the information we've received since July has been evolving and changing generally I am confident that the school can operate safely and provide your child with the high-quality educational experience that they so desperately need now.

Mr Raw and Heads of House shared with you all a plan for restart back in July but if you'd like a fresh copy of this important information then all letters and Parent Bulletins shared with you are all still available on the school website.

As a parent myself, I have been frustrated and concerned regarding some of the confusion and conflicting messages around whether secondary students and their teachers and support staff should wear face coverings in school. Currently, the official line in England is that face coverings aren't required to be worn by students or the staff whilst in school. I have reflected on this a good deal over the last few weeks and our approach at Wapping High will be that students and staff can choose to wear face coverings should they wish, regardless of the information we are receiving from Public Health England or from central government. Incidentally, in areas where there are potentially larger gatherings of adults e.g. staff meetings and the staff base at break and lunch, staff will be required to wear face coverings for extra safety. Although students will be having breaks and lunch in their own bubbles which should provide the required safety, they will be encouraged to wear a mask if it helps them feel less anxious.

As I say, I am a parent myself and this is a worrying time but I do agree with our Prime Minister's analysis that our young people do need to go back to school, not only for their own learning but for their wider physical and mental health and development. I am hoping that I can count on your support to ensure your child attends school and you and your child trust us to do everything we can to provide the necessary safety whilst achieving this.

On a more light-hearted note and regardless of the frustrating issues involving GCSE grade issue for all schools in England, Wapping High School have done well again in this year's exam results. Teaching staff made sure that teacher assessed grades were fair and very accurate and thankfully common sense prevailed at Ofqual meaning that our teacher grades became the actual grades. This leaving Year 11 were a particularly strong cohort and, regardless of the challenges of lockdown, worked amazingly hard with their teachers to ensure they achieved as much as they could. I have to say I'm so very proud of all of them and of the staff who in difficult circumstances pulled out all the stops to ensure they had every chance to succeed. Well done to all!

Incidentally, if your child is entering into Year 11 or Year 10 this year, I have managed to secure an arrangement with a tutoring company who will provide additional online learning support from mid-September onwards which is significantly earlier than most other schools who will begin their tutoring programmes in November. I have initially set up 30 small group tutor places for targeted Year 11s and 10s although I may add to this figure if the programme proves a success. Please also note that Ms Ingram plans to further expand the school's 1 to 1 and group coaching and mentoring programme this year which I'm certain will also have a further significantly positive impact on getting everyone back to normal quickly which of course is really welcome at the moment.

Finally, as a reminder to you all, next Wednesday is a staff training day which will be focused on ensuring everything is ready for your child to join us on Thursday, the 3rd of September. Please do read the school website and all Covid related communications from the school to remind you of what's required and what is happening but please do feel you can email me on headteacher@Wappinghigh.org and I'm ready to answer any of your questions as quickly as I can.

My best wishes



Gary Nelson