



18 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

A good start made

Two weeks ago we welcomed the first pupils back for the new academic year. Since then every year group has had an induction morning with their Head of Year and Form Tutor, culminating in a short service for each Tutor Group (mostly outside) as they left. They then started on successive days on their new, staggered timetable. The full timetable for all year groups has been running since Wednesday, 9th September. Particular attention has been given to keeping each year group in its "bubble" by timetabling their lessons each day in the same areas for the whole day. We have also been working hard with pupils to ensure calm and suitably swift movement around the school buildings whenever this is needed. We are all getting used to the staggered starts, breaks and departures. Teaching staff are adapting to working in several different classrooms through the day. The school caterers are serving lunches in two different spaces to one year group at a time. None of this is what we would have normally expected or chosen, but everyone in this school community is playing their part in making it work.

The challenge this week

After all the work to get the new routines established, our biggest challenge this week has been not having a number of teaching staff available because of the proper need for some to stay at home until they or one of their dependents can be tested for the Coronavirus. This puts particular pressure on the whole staff team. So far we have managed to cover every session effectively. It is a good thing that we have some extra staff capacity built into the system through our decision to shorten every lesson from 50 to 40 minutes. This means not only that we are still able to offer a whole curriculum to every year group, but also to support each year group with a Teacher on Duty in that "bubble" for each lesson of the day. We are also able to fill many more of the gaps which are occurring with regular members of our teaching staff.

A good response from pupils

Pupils and students are adapting remarkably well to the changed structure of the school day. They are cooperating well with the changed requirements of being on site. In terms of the training we are giving them for this, our focus in the first two weeks has been on establishing good systems and strong routines for the movement around the site, where this occurs. In some cases this needs much thought and repeated practice, and it is satisfying to see this making a difference.

Anticipating future problems

Given the concerns about the number of Coronavirus cases rising over the weeks to come, we are at the same time giving renewed attention to remote curriculum provision. We want to do as much as we can alongside our daily work here now to be prepared for any future interruptions. This does mean that in the week beginning 21st September we will be finishing some lessons earlier on three days for particular

classes, so as to give all teaching staff access to external training in the use of Microsoft Teams. This was the only way we could do this at short notice and it seems a wise and necessary precaution and each year group will only be affected once. A letter from Miss Eyre will explain exactly how this will work. I apologise for any inconvenience this causes you. We want, however, to be sure that we can use this technology with confidence, should the need arise. Training for pupils and for parents will follow soon thereafter.

Changes to the Discipline policy

There have been changes made to the discipline policy that include an Everyday Detention run by pastoral teams, focusing on five key areas: correct equipment, correct uniform, punctuality, the beginning and end of lessons and moving around the site properly- the detention will take place on the day the note is issued and will last between 15 minutes and 1 hour depending on how many times a note for one of the five has been issued; we have sharpened current practice in our approach to detentions, ensuring more serious sanctions for those who consistently do not meet expectations; we have also amended the Home/School Agreement to ensure clarity of expectation of pupil, parent(s)/carer(s) and school- copies of this will go home next week and will be signed by pupils/parents and carers/school for all Year Groups, this will supersede the agreement originally signed when your child entered Year 7. To clarify, the Demerit is now a record of a pupil not listening or working quietly/in silence when requested and will no longer be accompanied by an automatic detention. Copies of the new policy can be found in the Policies section of the school website.

Staff changes

At the start of this school year we are pleased to welcome a number of colleagues on to the staff team. Miss Buenor has joined as Assistant Head of English, along with Mr R Cook and Miss Hanley, teachers of English. Miss Petty as part-time teacher of Music, Miss Mullins as teacher of Geography and Ms Tanna as part-time teacher of Science. Miss Miller has returned to Tenison's again, as Teacher in charge of the Pupil Support Room, and as Head of Year 8, whilst Miss Whittaker takes a year away from pastoral leadership to give more time to teaching. At the end of last term I also announced that Ms Taylor is the new Head of Year 13 and Mrs Croker the new Head of Geography.

Further teaching colleagues have also joined us, Mr Bragg in Art, Ms Smith in Technology and Mr Richardson in Business Studies and History. Miss Hughes and Mrs Williams have joined as Learning Support Assistants. Mr Frost's role is changing so that he can combine being Learning Support Manager, alongside the responsibility for Exams. Ms Nestoret will continue as IT technician and Miss Sherlock has become Assistant Head of Languages, with Miss Victoria Rabenarivo joining the MFL team to cover Miss Smerald's maternity leave which will begin later this term. Mrs Cheney, teacher of PE and Head of Year 12 will also soon begin maternity leave. Mr Otterburn, Head of Computing is now also Assistant Head of Year 12 in her absence.

There have also been changes on the Senior Leadership team. Miss Eyre and Mr Cook both take on the role of Acting Deputy Headteacher. Mrs Gravett, Head of Music is returning to the SLT team as Interim Assistant Headteacher, joining Mrs Jefferson, Head of English and Mr Scott, Head of Physical Education, both of whom continue their roles from last year. We have also formed a wider Senior Leadership Group to include other senior colleagues with particular areas of strategic responsibility in the school this year: Mr Archer, with his oversight of assemblies and their link to the school's Christian character; Mr Bowers and Ms Hutchinson with their work on Racial Equality and Empowerment and Mrs Robinson, SENCO, for her work on being a trauma informed school.

Long-term priorities

Whilst we continue to concentrate our efforts now on making the school as healthy and safe as it can be, and regularly updating our COVID-19 Risk Assessment on the school website, we must not lose sight of our Christian educational vision for this school community. Our three priorities for this year are: to communicate our academic purpose more clearly; to make our teaching more memorable; and to help more pupils overcome the barriers to good learning. In those famous words from the Old Testament, "the joy of the Lord is our strength". Psalm 111 also makes a great connection between delight and study. We have to keep that before us as we start this year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Parrish". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Richard Parrish
Headteacher