



Friday 26 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your families well at the end of what has been a challenging term for everyone. We are so pleased to have our students back in school and to be going into the Easter holidays together. There is a definite sense of our moving out of a period of uncertainty and a return to the normality we have craved for so long. In many ways, the contents of my letter today reflect that journey.

A Few Reminders

We hope that the twice-weekly tests are going well and that you have found some sort of new rhythm in your home every Wednesday and Sunday. May I ask that families register the outcome of each result [using this link](#). It is also possible to add test results retrospectively if you have not had an opportunity to do so.

Contact Tracing Now and Over Easter

We are fortunate in that we have not had a positive case of COVID-19 for some time and certainly not since schools reopened. In the event that we do, we will have to identify any close contacts and ask that they self-isolate for up to ten days (the ten-day count begins on the last day your son or daughter came into contact with the positive case).

In the same way that we managed the Christmas period, we now have to plan for and think about the Easter holiday. If your son or daughter tests positive for COVID-19 on or after Thursday 1 April then we ask that you [use this link](#) to let us know. Once submitted, a member of the leadership team will be alerted and one of us will then identify the close contacts and make contact with their families.

In order to reduce the risk that your son or daughter contracts the virus or is identified as a close contact (and therefore has to self-isolate), we ask that they continue to maintain social distancing wherever possible, including when they socialise outside.

Farewells and Welcome Back

Next week we shall be saying farewell to three colleagues who will be greatly missed. Mr Brough, known to almost all students for many years simply as 'Graham', will be retiring from the site team after many, many years' service. He will be greatly missed by us all! Meanwhile, Mrs Hannis will also be departing. Her work has helped deepen our links within our community and those who are closely involved with our Extra Time Clubs and the Chipping Norton's Partnership of Schools will know and value her as much as we do. We also wish her well and thank her for the superb work she has done for our school over many years.

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Finally, with Mrs Miller's return from maternity leave after Easter, we will be saying goodbye to Mrs Graham who will be moving into a new role in another school. Her energy, enthusiasm and commitment have been greatly appreciated by the English Department!

Free School Meals Eligibility

We know that the pandemic has caused disruption to the working lives of so many families in so many different ways. If your circumstances have changed, albeit temporarily or not, we recommend that you [follow this link](#) to our short survey that will help you learn more about the eligibility for and the benefits of free school meals. These extend far beyond the obvious. The way in which we manage these enquires is confidential and handled with the utmost sensitivity. We invite families to explore this with us if they, or someone they know, might benefit from this support.

Building Back Better

I was struck by President Biden's phrase a few weeks back and it felt like a useful way to think about the world once we are through the pandemic. It is all about small steps, of course, but with regards to our work at Chipping Norton School, we have reached the point where we have to reassert all of the high expectations and aspirations that existed in the autumn term, now that our students are back into school and those routines are re-established.

You will be aware that we deliberately decreased the amount of homework that we set for our younger students and have been particularly keen to demonstrate compassion and patience about a number of other expectations at this time. However, we feel the time is right to remind one another that when we return after Easter *we must get back to normal in every sense*.

As we approach Easter, we have tried to get all students ready for this and have shared our determination to make the summer term our best term yet. This is why everything, from homework and revision, to attendance, behaviour and appearance, must be 'excellent as standard' every single day. Nowhere is this truer than in our planning and delivery of our lessons.

In the classroom, we will be revisiting our expectations on the delivery of a knowledge-rich curriculum with a focus on smart task design, powerful explanations, modelling of outcomes and regular practice. Our style of teaching is encapsulated in the acronym TEMP. Please be reassured that we shall always aspire to deliver high-TEMP lessons so that your children are highly engaged, successful and therefore freer to pursue their own journeys in life. I have no doubt that my colleagues have demonstrated incredible flexibility, tenacity and creativity through both lockdowns but we are all much happier and effective when we are in our natural habitat – the classroom!

Compassion or High Expectations?

We know in the way that we bring up our own children that we do not have to be one or the other – we can and must be both. We must attend to the immediate problems and challenges a child faces (through our compassion), whilst never taking an eye off their long-term happiness and security (through our high expectations). As a school and as a parent or carer, we can and must be both.

I will be in touch with a brief note on Wednesday, the last day of term – which finishes at the normal time of 3:15pm.

Yours faithfully



Barry Doherty, Headteacher