

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Headteacher:
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Dear Parents and Carers,

Initially, I would like to start this letter with a number of thank yous. Firstly, thank you to all of the parents that have been inconvenienced due to students having to be kept at home as a result of our staffing shortages.

Thank you also to all the staff that have covered for their colleagues. Teaching different classes, different subjects all at different times can be both challenging and exhausting, particularly when you are giving up your planning time to do it, meaning that there is even more work for you to do after hours.

Finally, thank you to our amazing students, who have been so resilient, flexible and adaptable, breezing through all the changes with patience and good humour.

Thank you to Stevenage Community Trust

We would like to show our appreciation to the Stevenage Community Trust for their generous grant which has allowed us to purchase students a school hoodie.

All Year 7 students have received their hoodies, and Years 8-11 will be receiving theirs next week.

Covid update

We believe that we can start having all classes back in again next week. We are anticipating having about six or seven staff off a day, but although tight, we should be able to cover all classes. I am sure you appreciate however that even just a small spike will mean another adjustment to our plans. We are asking staff to test on a Sunday morning so we have time to make plans for Monday if the worst happens and we have another wave of staff having to self-isolate.

We continue to have a number of students isolating as a result of positive tests and this does not seem to be abating. We are in regular contact with Public Health England and the Department of Education and continue to follow all of their advice. Students remain in bubbles, staff test regularly and wear face masks, cleaning is rigorous and we are very discerning about allowing visitors on site.



Unfortunately, a casualty of this has been our Open Evenings for Years 5, 6 and 7 as these have had to be postponed until after half term. I am really hoping that the two week half term will be the 'fire break' we need to see the back of this current wave of Covid cases.

To help us control cases in the future, please can I remind you to continue lateral flow testing your children and sending the results in to school.

Rewards

As I am sure your children have shared with you, we have launched our new rewards system this week and the students have largely embraced it with enthusiasm. I would like to reassure you that this is not a process of bribing your children to work at school, which I know has been a concern of some parents. Conversely, the desired outcome is to praise those students that get it right, rather than focussing all our attention on negative behaviours and the consequences that derive from them. Currently I would suggest that there is a really positive atmosphere across the whole school. It is just as lovely to give out rewards, as it is to receive them.

Visits from the local police

We have had a few visits from our local Police and PCSOs over the past couple of weeks. These have been extremely positive relationship building exercises with the students. A small group of year 7 boys thoroughly enjoyed sitting in the car with the sirens on whilst in the playground over lunch.

Year 11s

We are very conscious about the short length of time that we have left with our Year 11s before they leave us and move into the world at large. This can be a daunting time for parents and students and we recognise the responsibility we have in aiding them with this transition. It is for this reason that we look for opportunities to provide them with some loosely supervised periods of independence.

For this reason, we would like to allow some Year 11 students to be off site during lunchtime. This will be with permission of parents, and only when staff and parents feel that the child is ready and independent enough to do this safely.

We recognise that some students are not ready now, but will be in a few months' time. We are actively trying to temper the 'shock factor' of leaving school with slow and steady occasions where we can build the students' independence and resilience. This will always be closely monitored and can be withdrawn if it is deemed inappropriate, or that students are abusing the privilege.

If you are happy with your child having time off site at lunchtime then please complete the attached form. This will then act as a permission slip for when we feel it is the right time for your child to be given this opportunity. Without the signed permission, your child will not be allowed off site even if we think they are ready and able to cope.

Parents Evening

We are hoping that we will still be able to run our parents' evening for Years 7, 9 and 11 on Thursday 2nd December. Please make a note of this in your diary. We will keep you updated on Covid cases and whether Public Health England will allow this to go ahead.

I am looking forward to a Friday when I can write to you without the letter being completely dominated by Covid. Hopefully, that time will arrive very soon.

I wish you a relaxing and safe weekend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Pearce', followed by a long horizontal line that tapers to the right.

David Pearce
Headteacher