

16<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Parents

Here we are at the end of the first half term of this academic year! The school site looks very autumnal from my office window as the leaves turn all shades of amber and bronze. It has been a week of wet weather as well – I am convinced that rain is the main enemy of Covid school as we try to line up children and move them around the site in the wet. We are so lucky with our outdoor space and we will miss being able to have the children outside as often as the winter draws in. We have achieved a great deal in the last six weeks – everyone is back in school and safe. We have excellent attendance from pupils across the school which is lovely to see. New pupils in Year 7 and Reception are settled – as are our new staff! The most amazing event this week has been organised by Mrs Hood and has us looking forward to the promise of spring during these cold autumn days. In the summer she asked my permission to plant 4000 crocus bulbs... not one of the more usual run-of-the-mill questions that I get asked! Once I had established that this was not only part of the Science curriculum but also supported by the Rotary Club, I was very happy to agree! This week Year 4 have been able to plant just some of the bulbs – more go in on the school site next week! Here is Mrs Hood's report:

*Well done to Year 4 who spent time on Wednesday planting 1700 purple crocus corms at Sir Charles Starmer House. This work was undertaken in partnership with the Rotary Club as part of their Purple4Polio project. The Rotary Club have provided us with 4,000 corms and the remaining corms will be planted within the school grounds by pupils. We are all looking forward to seeing the carpet of purple in the spring.*

*The Year 4 teachers are proud of the children who enthusiastically planted the corms. They also smiled and waved at the residents who watched from the windows and were overjoyed to see the children. This activity helped to cement their recent Biology work as well as linking to our Concordia Crescimur curriculum. Well done Year 4, your community work is commendable.*



Mr Robson has asked me to commend Year 11 on their positive attitude to the careers opportunities that they have had this half term: *I would like to continue to congratulate Year 11 for the maturity and positivity they are showing in the one to one CareerWave interviews - some excellent comments from the external careers advisor.*

*Year 11 should check their emails and be aware that there are open events and activities from the colleges over the half term holiday that they should try to dip into if they are keen to apply.*

*The One Vision Year 10 cohort of students have again had some very positive feedback from all the virtual interviews which have been held.*

*Can I subject specifically also say well done to my Year 8 German group for an excellent start to the academic year and for some outstanding recordings in German which have been sent to me as a different kind of homework over the past week.*

It isn't just teaching of the academic subjects that has begun again this half term - Miss Rachel and her Dance students, from Reception upwards, have been busy in the Old Gym every night after school. This report is from Miss Rachel:

*Dear Parents,*

*It has been fabulous to be allowed back into school this half term to teach all the dance classes. I have taken a few snapshots of some of the students who have been enjoying their ballet classes.*

*I have enjoyed meeting the new Reception children who have joined the Tuesday ballet class this term, they have lots of fun and especially like the "Monster Walks"!!!! The Year 3 students are now studying Grade One Ballet having successfully passed their Primary examination in March and they look so smart in their new leotards and character outfits.*

*Dance classes currently run every evening after school and students may study Ballet and Tap/Modern. It's never too late to learn Dance and the benefits are extremely beneficial. Anyone who would like more details should contact Miss Rachel via email.*

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*I look forward to seeing everyone after the half term holidays.*

*Miss Rachel*



The hard fought Senior School News Quiz has also been ongoing – although it has had to move to ‘bubbles’ rather than being a feature of Vertical Tutor Time as it normally is. Mr Robson has sent me the half term standings:

<p><b>YEAR 7</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7S 31 points</li> <li>2. 7J. 30 points</li> <li>3. 7V. 29 points</li> <li>4. 7B. 26 points</li> </ol>	<p><b>YEAR 8</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 8Bi. 33 points</li> <li>2. 8B. 31 points</li> <li>3. 8G. 28 points</li> <li>4. 8D. 23 points</li> </ol>
<p><b>YEAR 9</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 9C. 32 points</li> <li>2. 9M. 30 points</li> <li>3. 9W 29 points</li> </ol>	<p><b>YEAR 10</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10P. 33 points</li> <li>2. 10R 30 points</li> <li>3. 10T 29 points</li> </ol>

Mrs Elsdon and Mrs Mawson would like to say well done to Year 2 for settling into the new school routines. *We are so proud of your effort and enthusiasm towards your learning. Have a lovely half term holiday, keep safe and best wishes.*

This morning our wonderful Head Students (together with the prefect team) did an assembly for all Year 11s about revision and coping with exam stress - things that are much on their mind at the moment! Mrs Bailly wrote me the following report: *They gave lots of helpful advice and produced a handout about revision for all GCSE subjects. I was able to congratulate those winning top housepoints for the term, plus top attendance and most use of GCSE Pod, and hand out certificates for Sports Leadership. Finally, I was able to reiterate my admiration for how the whole year group have coped with the difficult nature of this term. Life is difficult enough if you are a Year 11 without the uncertainties we are all living with – Mrs Bailly wanted me to say how very proud she is of how well they have coped.*

Mr Turnbull has this half term had the pleasure of Forest School with Year 6, who have all thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He sent me these pictures:



He has also sent me some pictures of the periscope making which Year 6 have been doing as part of their Science curriculum. They have been looking at how light travels in straight lines and the angles of incidence and reflection:



Mrs Farley Smith would like to announce the half termly winners of the attendance rewards by Senior School form or Junior School class:

### Junior

R/1 Fauna	98.7%
3 Diana	98.3%
2 Mercury	98.0%

### Seniors

11S	97.2%
9W	96.9%
7B	96.5%

Well done to all pupils in those classes – what an excellent achievement!

This week we also hosted our first virtual parents' evenings, for Junior School parents. I know that Junior School teachers were quite apprehensive beforehand about talking to so many parents over Teams, but everyone was incredibly positive afterwards and felt that it had been a really useful experience. Yet another manifestation of the 'new normal' and another hurdle that we have jumped.

I'm sure that you will have plenty to occupy you over the half term holiday but just in case you or your children are at a loose end, can I draw your attention to the PHPA Halloween and Bonfire Night competitions which have gone out via email this week? We hope for lots of spooky and exciting creative entries! Mrs Brown is also organising a Sponsored Read for Junior School children – I would very much urge everyone to get involved in this as it will not only help improve your readings (very important to an English teacher like me!) but also raises money for us to purchase books for Junior School. Again the details have been sent out via email – so get reading!

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for everything you have done to support school this half term as we have all adapted to new routines and challenges. We are very lucky in having such a supportive parent body. Having taught Year 11 Period 5 today I can definitely affirm that pupils are more than ready for a rest – as are staff. I hope Year 10 and 11 in particular use the time wisely and continue their study time (1 hour per day for Year 10, 2 hours per day for Year 11). But everyone also needs some time to rest in order to return full of energy and enthusiasm for learning on 2<sup>nd</sup> November!

Enjoy the half term holiday

Best wishes

Kate Reid