



DARRICK WOOD SCHOOL

RESPECT | RESPONSIBILITY | HONESTY

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your continued support over what has been a very challenging three months for us all. I wrote to you before half term and again in the half term about the plans for the wider opening of secondary schools. Since then we have had three days of Year 10 and 12 students coming into school to meet with their tutor or other pastoral staff. I have to say it has been such a pleasure to welcome them back. They have been brilliant at respecting the social distancing rules in place around the site and we are already looking forward to seeing them again soon within the guidance set by the government. Turnout has been excellent. In my email before half term I referred to this early stage of the wider opening as Phase 1. We are using the information gained from the students to plan for Phase 2 which will allow some small group teaching on site for these year groups and enhancement of our virtual learning offer.

Please be aware that the government have significantly restricted what we can offer on site. Only up to 25% of Years 10 and 12 combined can be on site on any one day with very little mixing of groups allowed. Most of our classrooms cannot house more than 8 people at a time with the 2m distance rule in place. During Phase 2, each child will therefore be invited to come to school on three more occasions at most. This is the only way we can provide the face to face contact that the government allows. Further details will be sent to parents of Years 10 and 12 once the plans are finalised. We have a provisional start date of Monday, 29th June for some students.

On Monday this week the government announced schools could now invite students from other year groups for the face to face meetings we have been having with Years 10 and 12 but still with guidance as to how many students on site at a time. Whilst we would like this opportunity for all year groups, we cannot deliver this in the time the government have given us this term. We have therefore decided to invite in Year 7 because the parents' evening was cancelled along with that for Year 10. Later this week, Year 7 parents will receive appointment dates, times and guidance to give to their children. It is important that they attend on time. I regret that parents cannot attend with their children but we plan to share relevant information from the meetings with parents via the annual report before the end of term. Reports for students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will be issued before the end of term.

End of Year Exams were postponed whilst we were unaware for how long schools would remain closed. It is clear now that we will not be able to complete these exams before the end of term for any year group.

Thank you to those of you who have contacted me to provide useful insight into the home learning experience as it has developed over the last three months. As I have mentioned before, we are very keen to develop this further especially in light of the continued situation where most learning has to continue happening at home and not at school even for Years 10 and 12.

We have been trialling Microsoft Teams and voiceover PowerPoints and considering ways to increase the level of interest, engagement and interaction as well as providing lesson activities at specific times of the day. The aim is to provide better structure to each student's day, to be clearer about what is required and better meet pupil needs through the virtual learning technology at our disposal. Our plans for Phase 2 are to incorporate these methods across teaching for all year groups. This is likely to mean departure from the normal timetable to ensure we have sufficient staff to deliver this enhanced home learning experience and provide for those students who are on site.

For Years 7 and 8, the subject areas would not change but the timing and the way we deliver lessons through the remaining weeks will have to. For Year 9, we will be continuing to provide lessons for the core subjects but will move to providing preparation lessons for starting Year 10 option subjects. This means that in Phase 2, Year 9 will no longer complete work in subjects they are not taking in Year 10. Parents of Year 9 will be notified which option subjects their children will be taking in the next week ahead.

Another aim of Phase 2 is to increase telephone contact with parents and students in year groups who are not coming on site (i.e. Years 8, 9). This has already begun. Please be aware that the School's number will sometimes show up as 'number withheld', so please answer if you can.

Finally, but importantly - Years 11 and 13. I can confirm that we have met the deadlines and guidelines for the submission of Centre Assessed Grades. We are not allowed to discuss these. However, this does not prevent us doing what we can to check in with these students to support their post-16 and post-18 pathways. Plans are afoot for Sixth Form orientation which will have to be virtual this year, but we know that individual student pathways will vary and we will endeavour to support them through this time.

Thank you to parents/carers who have written to me individually with very specific feedback relating to the current situation. I apologise that due to the current constraints on my time it has not always been possible to provide an individual response but hope that what I have set out above addresses the issues raised.

Yours sincerely

Dr M J Airey

Head Teacher