

11 September 2020

Dear Students, Parents and Carers

It has been wonderful to welcome back all our students this week and see them engaging so well with their teachers. Despite national concerns of low attendance, we were very pleased to see that our rates of attendance immediately returned to very close to normal, averaging 97% this week.

We are disappointed not to be running our vertical cross-year mentor groups at the moment especially as these groups really help Year 7 settle into the school quickly. Thankfully this does not seem to have stopped Year 7 enjoying their first week and it has been lovely to see how quickly they have settled into secondary school life.

The overwhelming majority of students have returned to school in full correct uniform and are looking very smart as usual. We all expect to keep it this way so thank you for your continued support with this.

At the moment, we are not planning to run any evening events this half term, such as the Key Stage 4 Evening. This will be reviewed as we monitor the national situation and government guidance. We are working on plans for alternative ways to run these evenings and will advise you once we have finalised these plans.

We were promised an announcement regarding GCSE examinations for next summer. There is no further news at the time of writing and I will update you when the Government release any detail. Students know that, at any point in the future, we could find ourselves in a position where teachers are asked to submit Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) as we were this summer.

Given her experience of the CAG process in Year 11 last term, my Year 12 daughter explained to me how she will now approach school in case her teachers need to do this for her A levels. She explained to me that she feels it is important that her teachers have a strong set of evidence that allows them to award her grades that match her full ability. She said that this means that every piece of classwork, every piece of homework, every test or assessment will be completed to the best of her ability. This will ensure that her teachers can award the very best grades that she deserves to help her access the next important phase of her education. I have emphasised the importance of this to Key Stage 4 students when I spoke with them earlier in the week.

Indeed, none of us could have predicted the situation we found ourselves in during May when we were asked to submit grades and none of us can predict whether or not this may happen for future year groups as well. So it is important that all students show their best

work at all times. I have had a similar conversation with my son in Year 9, so please do speak with your children about the importance of this.

Our staggered breaks have meant that the queues in the Dining Hall are very short which means students are being served very quickly, so if you would like your children to try school meals, now is a good time to experience this. We will be moving to a cashless catering system later this month so that we do not have to handle cash between different people. At the moment any change handed back to students has not been touched for at least 3 days and our catering assistants all wear gloves when students are paying for their food.

I am very pleased that over the summer the zebra crossing was installed by the park and stride car park at the Station Road end of Budds Lane to make the walk into school safer. Parents from all 3 schools are encouraged to use this and from Monday we will no longer be able to allow parents to drop children off using our bus loop and visitors car park. This was a condition of the planning application we submitted as part of our new building being approved. I did relax this expectation while I was unhappy with the lack of zebra crossing. However, now that Hampshire County Council have installed the crossing I am sure you appreciate that I must now enforce this and from Monday a member of staff will be at the front of school to direct cars to the park and stride car park. Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation with this.

This week has flown by and we all look forward to our second week back. In the meantime, I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Hemmings', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Hemmings
Headteacher