

16 October 2020

Dear parent/carers

Re: End of half term 1 letter

I am writing to you at the end of a very busy and successful half term. Our Academy community has risen to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic whilst further raising standards. We have seen our Academy values of Integrity, Ambition and Excellence lived every day. My team and I have been exceedingly grateful for your overwhelming support since September – thank you.

You are aware that two members of our community tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday 13 October 2020. Following these confirmed cases, and in consultation with Public Health England, a limited number of students in Year 9 and Year 10, along with three staff members, have been required to self-isolate. Our robust planning and zone/bubble based operational procedures have minimised the number of staff and students impacted by the confirmed cases. Students and staff who are self-isolating are required to do so until Friday 23 October 2020.

On Wednesday, we instigated our Blended Learning strategy with Year 9 students. They have been accessing 'live lessons' from home, delivered by their expert teachers, using Microsoft Teams. This innovative approach has been a real success, with high quality learning continuing despite the enforced time at home. During this week, we have taught 'traditional' lessons in the Academy, staff in the Academy have delivered 'live lessons' to students at home and staff, who are at home self-isolating, have delivered 'live lessons' to their classes in the Academy, supported by our cover supervisor team. I have been incredibly impressed with the resilience, creativity and hard work demonstrated by both our staff and students.

As cases of COVID-19 increase nationally, I fully expect further bubble closures and possibly even a 'circuit breaker' lockdown over the coming months. Therefore, it is imperative that every student can access Microsoft Teams and Office 365 from home. We have previously sent you 'Home Learning how to' guides, and there are video guides available on the Academy website under the Home Learning tab. If you do have any issues at all with this, in terms of logging on, accessing work, or access to effective technology, please do contact us via email, office@dukeries.atrust.org.uk, and my team will be on hand to support.

The link between high attendance and excellent achievement and progress is well documented. Our 100% attendance competition recognised and celebrated great attendance, in the first half term. I am pleased to announce the winners of the main prizes were N Bradshaw and K Neil.

However, I would like to remind you that students should not attend the Academy if they, or any member of their household, display coronavirus symptoms. This does not affect a student's attendance total, as this type of absence is recorded as 'X' - not expected to attend, and so your child will still receive any attendance awards that are available to them.

A reminder that the main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Reading is another key priority at The Dukeries Academy. We have launched our '18 by Eighteen' project to identify the 18 books we believe all students should read before they leave school. There have been a huge number of suggestions including Bleak House by Charles Dickens, Enduring Love by Ian McEwan, The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, Dracula by Bram Stoker and Harry Potter by JK Rowling. If you wish to nominate yours, or your child's, favourite book, please let us know via our Twitter feed or Facebook site using the #18by18 hashtag. We have also launched a project called DEAL (Drop Everything and Listen) which is designed to enhance students' fluency in reading and develop their vocabulary. Each day, students listen to staff read fiction, non-fiction and poetry extracts and complete an associated task. I will update you on the impact of this work next term.

We are fully launching our ClassCharts app after half term. This will now include attendance data, home learning (this will replace SMHW) and will be our main way of communicating information with parents/carers. This is in addition to the information currently available via Class Charts: Recognition Points and other rewards, Negative Behaviour Points, detentions and sanctions.

We sent login details earlier in the term and a large number of parents have already logged in. Can you please ensure you have downloaded the app and accessed Class Charts by 3rd November 2020. If you are having any difficulties using the app, please contact our reception or email us office@dukeries.attrust.org.uk. I am pleased to inform you that we are currently achieving a positive to negative points ratio of 7 to 1, meaning for every one 1 negative point, students across the academy are receiving 7, which is fantastic and highlights all the amazing work that we currently have taking place. Pin badges, certificates and a range of other recognition events will take place after half term to celebrate the achievements of our wonderful students.

Finally, I hope you and your family have a safe and enjoyable half term, despite the COVID restrictions, and I look forward to welcoming students back to the Academy on Tuesday 3 November at 8.40am.

Kind regards



Mr Ged Rae
Principal