

Looking Back and Looking Forward...

Dear parents, carers and families,

We have reached the end of Week 2 and have now successfully navigated 10 school days under the new, restricted, mode of schooling! So what have we learned?

We have learned that working this way is more intense and tiring than the usual way our school life is set up. I know that staff are expressing higher levels of tiredness at the end of each day, and I am aware that many pupils are coming home much more drained than we might normally expect after a day at school. This is, I think, because the intensity of being in pretty much the same seat all day, with no lesson changeovers or formal breaks means that we are all unable to take advantage of those times as we normally would to switch off. With this in mind, I have to say I continue to be delighted with the impressively mature way almost all pupils are handling the situation at present – we are really proud of them. I am also very grateful to staff for their continuing and unflagging commitment and effort, and to parents for your continued support. Please do continue to check-in with your children as to how they are finding the return, given the intensity of the school environment they are working in at the moment and if you have any queries at all please do contact us – email is currently best, and we are still working really hard to respond to these within 24 hours if at all possible.

We are finding the new setting arrangements are settling down, and pupils are learning well in school. Teachers are working hard to identify and measure learning that took place through lockdown (or, in some cases, did not take place!) and are devising new learning plans that will support all pupils' improved progress. We have also completed any curriculum changes and begun to find catch-up slots in school for pupils in Year 11. We still intend to offer P6 extra lessons for Year 11 in the near future – parents will be asked for their views next week.

I am currently also working on a plan for Year 6 prospective parents and pupils to be able to visit KLA under the current restrictions. We are planning to offer places on small tours through the school during the working day following a specially written and very tightly-planned additional risk assessment. This will mean visitors being restricted to corridors (we are lucky in that almost all our classrooms have lovely large windows which allow people to see in without having to enter a room!) and being limited in what we can show them – this is not the full open day tour we have traditionally run, but I think it is only fair that we provide these opportunities for those pupils looking to choose their secondary school, and I understand that our intended approach mirrors that being taken by the other two secondary schools in the town. However, I also want to be sure that my current community of parents is comfortable with this idea, and would ask any parent who is likely to have any concern about this to email me at alan.fletcher@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk so we can take those into consideration.

I have been asked by the PE team to ask parents to check the clothing pupils are wearing to school on PE days. We have of course relaxed slightly our rules on PE kit for the moment,

KLA Bulletin

because pupils are wearing this all day on a PE lesson day, but a few pupils appear to have taken this as an opportunity to wear inappropriate clothing for PE. To be clear, pupils should still be wearing PE kit for lessons, and if they wish they may wear a hoodie or warm top and/or tracksuit bottoms – any other casual clothing is not appropriate for school. We welcome your help with this.

Regardless of how many alterations and preventative measures we have put in place, and how successfully those have been implemented, I think it is virtually inevitable that we will at some point have to deal with a positive case of Covid being identified at KLA. Our school is, of course, always a reflection of our community and given the rate at which case numbers are rising across the country it appears to be highly likely that this is going to happen at some point – we already have significant numbers of young people and a few staff now having to isolate while waiting for a test and no sign that this appears to be reducing. It is therefore I think only sensible that I outline for you what is likely to happen when that day arrives, so that everyone knows the likely processes we will follow when the time comes.

The point of having pupils in consistent year groups without mass pupil movement in the school is so that in the event of a case being discovered we can quickly identify who that pupil was in close contact with and ask either individual pupils or a single year group to self-isolate for 14 days, keeping the rest of the school open and functioning. The final decision on whether we have to ask individual pupils or a whole year group to self-isolate will not be mine – that will be made clear by Public Health England and the Department for Education, who will manage any incidents of Covid in any school. I would hope that the measures we have put in place make it less likely that large numbers of pupils would have to stay home, but I cannot be certain of that. If there are multiple cases of course then the potential for a full year or full school closure becomes more likely – I have all fingers, arms and legs crossed that we do not find ourselves in that position, but it is very clearly out of our control! In the event of pupils not being able to come into school as usual we do have a programme of online learning ready, which is being finalised right now.

Your support as parents throughout the virus situation has been so valuable, and that has continued in how supportive all families have been when we have had to ask for children to self-isolate, take a test or stay home because of cold-like symptoms. Thank you for that – it has made my job much less difficult! I hope we do not find ourselves in a position where I have to share that we have a positive case in school, but I hope that you find this advance information about how we would deal with that situation helpful, and that it helps explain the preventative measures we have taken to try to minimise any potential impact.

I hope that everyone has a wonderful weekend, takes the chance to recharge those batteries and we look forward to another brilliant week beginning on Monday.

Best wishes,



Alan Fletcher