

KLA Bulletin

Friday, September 25th 2020

KING'S LYNN ACADEMY

Dear pupils, parents, carers and families,

Another week safely negotiated! I know there is much that I could be writing about this week – as covid cases rise I could be sharing details of the many conversations I have had with Public Health about everything to do with the measures we are taking to try to keep everyone free from the virus! – but I think it is about time that I avoided talking about the virus for a week.

So, instead, I would like to focus on our amazing pupils.

I really want to take this week's bulletin to ask you accept our thanks for the excellent way almost all of our 900 kids have returned to school. They have been absolutely brilliant. We were all a little worried about many things last month as we prepared for the mass return to school...would they be overwhelmed? Would they be worried? Would they cope with the new arrangements to keep us covid-secure? Would they be able to return to learning quickly?...and it is wonderful to report that they have been exceptional.

Year 7 have settled beautifully, and appear so far to be just the loveliest, friendliest bunch we have seen for a long while. Best ever? Just maybe! Year 11 have returned with the focus and approach they know they are going to need to be successful, and have adapted to catch-up routines really well this week. Years 8, 9 and 10 have impressed us with the amount of knowledge and previous learning they have retained, and evidence that most of them did, indeed, continue to work and learn during lockdown. It has been such a great feeling to have your children back in school for a month now, bringing with them the energy and cheerfulness they carry into school every day.

From many conversations with parents I know that many of you would have had concerns about how easily the children were likely to find coming back to school, and we had plans in place to address the possible needs we could foresee being apparent on full return, from academic gaps to mental health concerns. Over the first few weeks we have completed mental health and confidence scaling with all pupils, met individually with hundreds for Personal Development (PD) meetings, completed check-ins and baseline assessments to gauge extent of learning lost and begun catch-up sessions in Year 11 for most pupils in core subjects. The consistent thing we have found through completing all of these actions is that our pupils are incredibly resilient, and they are doing really, really well. The horror stories I keep reading about expected explosions in mental health issues for children, and 'lost generations' whose learning will never recover are just that – stories. While we have picked up a few pupils who have asked for some extra support (and we have a great team skilled in being able to give that support) the vast majority seem settled, confident and happy to be back. They are a credit to themselves and their families, and I do think it important that I share that with parents following a very successful first month back. Thank you too for all you did during lockdown and since the start of term to support us – it has certainly paid off from everything I am seeing!

I have been asked to share a few messages from various colleagues, so here goes:

- Parentpay is our system for online purchasing in school. If you haven't already done so, please could you set up an account by emailing data@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk (please remember to include your child's name!!) so that we can assist you to do so successfully. We believe that everyone who has contacted us so far to do this have now been added to the system. It is really important that this is completed, because at the moment we cannot

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accept cash for obvious reasons! Also, please could I ask parents to check the balance of your child's account at regular intervals and top up where necessary!

- We will begin our tours of KLA for prospective intake parents and pupils next week. I have had no parent query our approach to these (thank you for your confidence!) so we will from next week begin to have some visitors in school. At this time, although we would still prefer as much contact as possible to be electronic or by telephone, we will also begin to allow for the possibility for current parents to request in-person meetings where the issue is a big enough concern to warrant this.
- Currently, we are under very strict instructions from the Health and Safety Executive to make sure that all rooms in school remain as well-ventilated as possible. This, inevitably, means that windows in classrooms must be open at all times. While this has presented no issue during the warm early weeks of the year, the past few days have shown the challenge this is likely to bring throughout the winter. At the moment our approach to this is to allow children to wear coats in lessons (although I agree that this is not a perfect solution either). I am continuing to try to seek advice as to the practicality of this approach throughout the cold winter months.
- I am still waiting for detailed information from Ofqual and exam boards as to their plans for next summer's GCSE exams. We have decided to hold our own Year 11 mock examinations in January if we possibly can, and will share the timetable for this with students and parents after half-term so we can begin to work towards those fixed dates. We hope to complete a second, final set of mocks later in the year around Easter, although this will be dependant on the dates the exam boards set for the actual GCSE season – they are currently suggesting the exams be delayed until later in June and July, but this has not been confirmed. We will of course be making it very clear to Year 11 students that in the current circumstances it would be a very good idea to treat them as seriously as any final exam – I think there is still every chance that they might well have to be used in some way to help decide a candidate's final result!

Thank you as always for your help and support – and please do make sure your children know how proud we are of them at the end of what could have a very difficult month. I know we may still have challenges ahead to overcome, but if our pupils deal with those as well as they dealt with everything that has been thrown at them so far, I know that everything will be absolutely fine.

Best wishes,

Alan Fletcher