

13 November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I do need to inform you that two students, in Year 8 and Year 10, have tested positive for Covid-19. They are suffering only mild symptoms and are otherwise well and in good spirits. They are both from the same family and have been isolating since half-term due to their parents having symptoms and subsequently testing positive. It is highly likely they contracted Covid-19 from their parents during this time. There are no close contacts in school and so no further action needs to be taken. There are a few other things that are useful to share with you.

Communication

Following the events of last Friday when we needed to send the whole of Year 7 home, we have reviewed how we would communicate in the event of something similar occurring. We now have a text facility as well as email. If we need to contact you urgently, we will text and email in order to increase the chance of you seeing the message. If your contact details have changed at all, you can update them on the parent portal. It may be worth noting here that if you do get a text message, please do not respond directly to it but follow any instructions there might be for contacting the school.

On-line Teams Teaching

Due to half of Year 7 and the whole of Year 13 self-isolating this week, we have been using Microsoft Teams to deliver remote learning. This is the first time we have done this on such a scale and despite some understandable issues it has gone very well. It has been a steep learning curve for teachers and they have really risen to the challenge, as have the vast majority of students. Having live sessions has meant that students have followed their usual timetables enabling us to continue their learning without too much disruption. I would like to thank all our staff, parents and students for ensuring it has been a really positive week.

Remembrance Day

Despite much adversity, there have been some extremely positive aspects that have come out of our new way of working. One of these was Remembrance on Wednesday. We had a wreath laying, an impeccably observed silence by hundreds of students and the playing of the last post by year 12 student, Oscar Braun. It was a truly fitting tribute. We have already agreed to repeat this next year. You can see the pictures on our [twitter account](#).

Children in Need

Despite our own difficulties, today was a perfect opportunity to remind ourselves of those children who find themselves in far worse situations than we can possibly imagine. Despite usual activities being curtailed it was lovely to see the charitable nature of our students as we support those beyond our community who require the help that they deserve.

Staff shortages

Over the course of this pandemic, I have set out to be honest and upfront with you. Without wishing to overstate the situation, it has been increasingly difficult to keep all aspects of school life at the usual high standards. On Tuesday this week, we had 17 staff off, mainly for covid-related reasons and with the number of supply teachers we have to use on such days, it is difficult to maintain the same quality of provision; this inevitably puts a strain on the school community and its resources. There may be a time in the coming weeks when we need to adopt a different model of delivery with more year groups being asked to work from home. We would very much like to avoid this but I felt it was best to warn you in advance as it is certainly something that many other schools across the country are doing.

Schools are naturally buoyant places; the enthusiasm, humour and creativity that your children bring to school on a daily basis makes it a great place of work. We will continue to support and teach them as best we possibly can over the coming weeks, whether it is in school or remotely. However, there may be further obstacles ahead and I would like to thank you in advance for your continued support and, at times, patience and understanding.

Yours faithfully,



Tim Rand
Headteacher