

Open Academy Update 21 October 2020
For Parents and Students – please do discuss the contents with your child!

A very quick newsletter from us this week given that we have already broken up.

Thank you so much for your efforts to help keep this community safe. You have stuck to the advice and rules regarding illness, the students have overwhelmingly stuck to the safety procedures and we have managed to stay safe for now, which is a huge credit to the whole community – thank you!

Obviously, on our return we will redouble our efforts around keeping the community safe as it appears the situation will not be getting better soon. We will therefore, do all we can to continue to keep our students and our community as safe as possible – we are reviewing our risk assessments every week and adding new activities all the time that we can provide for the students and, whilst we are not back to normal, I am pleased to say we are achieving closer to normality than I thought might be possible back in August.

I do have concerns that spending so much time in a COVID-19 safe environment might lull the students into a false sense of security when out and about. I will be looking to develop some COVID-19 response leaders from the student body, to help us develop campaigns to appeal to young people to help them stay safe when out of school. I'm hoping this might be part of a wider county initiative, so I will share more about that next term.

Finally, please be aware that over half term we will be losing one disabled parking space to our safe zones approach outside school. There are students who need to use these spaces so I would ask that on busy days (usually when it is wet), please only use the disabled spaces for dropping off students who require their use, hopefully that will ensure those that need them will always have good access.

So much has happened this last couple of months it is impossible to summarise. There is so much still to come this year it is impossible to predict (apart from the things we know that will change like our regrouping of Year 8 which will happen immediately after half term! So, I will just encourage everyone to enjoy 'the now' of the half term break with your children and I hope that you all have the best of times possible. We will look forward to the students return refreshed and ready for learning on Monday, 2 November.

Jon Ford
Principal

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1. Year 8 Groups

In Year 8 we tend to have a swap around of the students as they are now fully established into high school. The groupings the students are currently in is based upon recommendations from their Year 6 primary school teacher. Of course they have moved on a lot in terms of maturity and academic progress since then! We have not been able to do this during the half term because the year group is completely full now that we are a very popular school – it takes a while to make sure that it will work logistically.

All students in Key Stage 3 have had the opportunity to have a progress check in low pressure computer based assessments. We have used a world renowned company called GL Assessments to help us with these. We have begun to analyse the data. The data gathered from the assessments, along with our own observations during and since lockdown have enabled us to create new groups. The students remain in 4 classes labelled HOPE. Every student has been reallocated a group – if they happen to be in the same lettered class as before then that is just a 1 in 4 chance! The students are completely mixed up to enable

them to work with new people. We have not changed the tutor groups so that the pupils are still with tutor friends that they have made and with the tutor that knows them so well.

We did the same thing with Year 9 last year at this point and it was tremendously successful. The learning boost following the changes was phenomenal.

Please note, PE lessons and times are not changed so there are no worries about PE kit days. Maths lessons are unchanged as they are set by ability.

The new timetable should be live in the SIMS app during next week. Pupils will be given a brand new printed timetable on the morning that they return.

If you have any questions please direct them through the form tutors in the first instance.

Mr Ward
Vice Principal

2. Vocab Lab

Mrs Roberts will be running an after-school club to improve/expand students' vocabulary in Years 7, 8 and 9. The club will run on Thursdays starting on Thursday, 5 November 2020 and will be held from 15.05-15.40. Please let Mrs Roberts know if your child would like to attend.

3. Library News

Library Competition Winners

Congratulations to Grace Sawicki in Year 7 who has won our National Poetry Day competition for her poem "No Sight, No Light" and Hannah Jordan in Year 9 who has won our 'Design a Library Card' competition. Both students were awarded with a certificate and small prize. All students will also receive a library card featuring the winning design next term.

Miss Ling
Librarian

4. Chaplain's Reflection

Aspiration

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

As this half term draws to a close I just wanted to wish you a wonderful half term, you are all in my thoughts and prayers. The Lord bless you & keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you & be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you & give you peace.

God bless.