



17 December 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to you at the end of a long, but ultimately successful term at the school.

Following the national lockdown during the summer months, we re-opened the school with some trepidation. Nationally, there was a lot of concern about how schools would get back up and running and how “damaged” our students would be through being out of school for so long. What we actually met was a student community determined to rise above adversity and not let this unprecedented year affect or define them. Staff were so relieved to welcome students back to learning and my overarching impression is that they were relieved to be back in school, working within a framework of high expectations and purpose. We have had to work extremely hard to run the school with many restrictions and risk control measures however, our marvellous staff and student body have pulled together to ensure that we did what was necessary. I could not be prouder of them all!

A high priority for the school has been to begin to make up ground that was inevitably lost over the lockdown, so we have asked the staff team to forensically assess where students have learning gaps and we have adjusted our curriculum plans to address these. Additionally, we have also started to implement our “catch-up” strategy, using additional funding that has been made available for this year. We have been particularly concerned to work with our year 11 students, as the lockdown has most significantly affected their GCSE courses. I have to say that we were delighted with the way that year 11 approached their PPE examinations and the seriousness of purpose that they have shown in their learning through the term. We will continue to support this year group as much as we possibly can into the new year and as we move towards their examinations.

In the early part of the term, we were fortunate to avoid significant impact caused by COVID positive cases. Whilst other local schools were sending many students home and moving to remote learning, we were able to continue with normal schooling. Perhaps inevitably, as the term has moved, we have seen more and more students and staff needing to isolate and that has meant staff and students resorting to our remote learning plans and the need to impose year group bubble rotas (due to staffing challenges). I am very grateful to staff, students AND parents/guardians who have supported our contingency plans so strongly. We have had to pull together as a community and that has been so evident through the last few months. We will review the situation early in the new year, hoping that we can be back to full operations.

Despite the challenges, the school and our students have continued to flourish. Please take some time to read through the latest edition of our half termly newsletter, published on our website [here](#). It contains a number of wonderful headlines and good news stories.

One of the features of the year is that our staff team has had to become very agile. Not only in terms of how we deliver teaching, but also in response to evolving government guidance and directives. Some decisions and directives have been well thought through and helpful, others less so. I have tried to keep you as informed as possible about what schools are being asked to do and the impact this may have on you. Alas, there will be more of this to come. This week the government started to reveal its thoughts about mass testing in this announcement [here](#). The initial guidance that has been published is somewhat bewildering and raises a great number of logistical questions which across the school and our Trust we are working through. I will update you on this in the New Year.

There have also been stories in the press about the government asking schools to move to remote learning for the first week of term. As yet, we have had no formal or official guidance on this and so our plan is to open as normal on Monday 4 January with all year groups back in school. We will let you know as soon as possible if this changes.

**Contact tracing and notification up until 23 December**

Once again, I would like to remind parents/guardians to let the school know of any positive results up until 23 December. Parents should inform the school if:

- a) your child develops symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, and
- b) they receive a positive test result up to and including Wednesday 23 December.

Please inform the school, using our monitored office email address: [MERoffice@maidenerlghtrust.org](mailto:MERoffice@maidenerlghtrust.org) This email address will be checked once a day at 12pm and any actions will then be taken. In all other situations over the holidays, and from 24 December onwards, parents should get in touch directly with NHS Test and Trace. The school will not pick up any messages sent beyond 23 December. Parents are also reminded that we will have a duty to contact you up until the end of the day on 23 December if your child has been in close or prolonged contact with a positive case of COVID 19 and that this would consequently mean a period of self-isolation.

Finally, we have been conducting year group assemblies over these last few days to celebrate the achievements of students and I have had the privilege of addressing each of these. I have asked students to choose to be optimistic about the new year, after all we have the promising news and implementation of a vaccine programme and we all hope that life may return to greater degrees of normality. I have also emphasised the need for rest and asked them to ensure they take a proper break over Christmas so that their batteries are recharged for 2021. I hope that they take my advice and that we can all start 2021 in a very positive way.

I do wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and we look forward to seeing our students again on Monday 4 January 2021.

Yours sincerely



**Mr A Johnson**  
Headteacher