



20 July 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

A year of huge achievement

As the sun shines and the weather warms up, we come to the end of the school year. Once again, this year has thrown a number of challenges our way. We began the year focussing on a new way of being a school – bubbles, staggered timings, extra cleaning measures and, most challenging of all, teaching lessons where staff had to distance from students. During this time, we also had a big focus on preparing and strengthening our online teaching support – work which became very valuable as more and more students and staff had to isolate, and then, after Christmas, as we moved into another full lockdown.

Through these challenges, we have been determined to keep our high expectations in place and, on the whole, our students have responded accordingly. I know it has been a great loss not to have the normal menu of extra-curricular activities and clubs, but I have been so impressed by the way our students have kept going. They have understood, perhaps in a new way, the value and opportunity of school and that we should make the most of every learning moment. That the students have done so well is due, in no small part, to the skills, expertise and resilience of the teaching team. Once again, they have had to be agile and responsive to the various educational challenges thrown our way; a full programme of online learning, adapting curriculum planning in response to lock down and the herculean Teacher Assessed Grading process to ensure that our year 11 students leave with the grades that they deserve.

The pandemic has affected so many of us in so many different ways and we have been acutely aware of the many pastoral, emotional and mental health needs that have arisen. Some of our students have had a particularly difficult time and, for them, school has been a safety net – a place where they could be confident that they would find consistency, routine and support. Our passionate and dedicated inclusion and pastoral team have been very committed to the continued, effective support and care for student and I would like to thank them for their work. We have organised a huge number of 1-1 and small group sessions, ELSA interventions, behaviour sessions etc. and also innovated with the introduction of the AQA unit awards and our STEPS programme to ensure that our curriculum provides opportunity for all our students, including those who are most vulnerable.

The challenges of the year have also put huge work pressures on our administrative and support staff. I am proud that our team do all they can to keep the school running smoothly and to allow student facing staff to teach and support children, lifting many of the administrative burdens. Their eye for detail and capacity to problem solve know no bounds! Perhaps this was exemplified most clearly in the short-notice setting up of a mass testing centre once the students returned from the lock down. If it wasn't for their dedicated focus and sheer hard work, the hugely impressive centre wouldn't have been set up in time and we wouldn't have been able to process the 2000+ tests that were necessary. Our office and support team have been super flexible in their time and so obviously committed to the vision of our school.

Of course, throughout the year, we have been buoyed and encouraged by the enduring support of you, our parents and carers. You have understood the difficult decisions we have had to make and supported students to continue to progress, even during the darkest days of the lockdown. We have appreciated the constructive feedback that so many have given and

the positive responsiveness when we have had to contact you over specific issues. I hope that the enhanced sense of collaboration we have built can continue to develop into next year.

There are so many highlights to share with you about school life, especially over the last half term. For all of the detail, please have a look at the latest edition of **The Pulse** which can be found [here](#).

Staff Changes

As is usual at the end of a school year we have a number of staff changes:

We say goodbye to:

- Mrs A Kent, Inclusion TA will be leaving for a well-earned promotion at another local school;
- Mrs C Nair, Teaching Assistant, who has already moved to a new role;
- Mrs Z Hatam, Mathematics teacher, will be leaving to pursue new opportunities;
- Mrs H Pepper, Modern Foreign Languages teacher, is leaving us for a well-earned promotion;
- Mr J Winstanley, Curriculum leader for Modern Foreign Languages, is relocating to a new school in a new area;
- Mrs S Quail, Science teacher, is moving to a new school;
- Ms K Holley, Drama teacher finishing a temporary contract.

We welcome to the team:

- Ms S Brazao, Modern Foreign Languages teacher;
- Ms A Bruna-Pividal, Curriculum leader for Modern Foreign Languages;
- Ms M Milicevic, Performing Arts teacher;
- Ms M Lone, Admin team;
- Miss L Blight, Teaching Assistant;
- Mr R Dawson, Teaching Assistant;
- Ms J Lane, Temporary careers advisor.

We also welcome back from maternity leave, Miss N Hancock and Miss H Williams.

The new school year

When we return in September, we hope and plan to move forward with fewer restrictions and more freedoms (e.g. extra-curricular activities). We are looking forward to being able to reset our high expectations of behaviour and excellence in school work. For more detail of some of the ways we want to refresh and re-establish expectations and routines, please see Mr Hood's recent letter [here](#) and my recent letter about mobile phones [here](#).

I am particularly looking forward to welcoming to school our new year 7 cohort. Once again, it has been frustrating to have to manage their transition to secondary school remotely and we cannot wait to meet them face to face. We are looking forward to sharing with them the Maiden Erlegh School in Reading 'DREAM' and to engage and inspire them in their lessons. In order to assist them with their transition, we will be welcoming them to a special transition day on Friday 3 September.



I am sure that you are also aware that we have had to amend our return to school dates for the new school year. I apologise if this has caused any disruption or inconvenience. We have been required to respond to the government decision to reintroduce a mass testing

programme at the beginning of the school year and to ensure that every student has been tested before they start their lessons. This has meant that we have had to stagger the return to school.

Here is a reminder of the testing date for students and when they should return to lessons:

Year Group	1 st Test	In lessons – 8:40am	2 nd Test
7	Thursday 2 September – PM	Friday 3 September	Tuesday 7 September
8	Monday 6 September - AM	Tuesday 7 September	Thursday 9 September
9	Monday 6 September - PM	Tuesday 7 September	Thursday 9 September
10	Friday 3 September- PM	Monday 6 September	Wednesday 8 September
11	Friday 3 September - AM	Monday 6 September	Tuesday 7 September

September also sees a return to a standard start of the day time: Students to be in school at 8.35am and in their tutor rooms at 8:40 am.

School lockers

We expect all students to have, and use a locker for their books, coats etc. We ask parents to make a payment of just £7.00 per annum for the use of the locker (this covers cleaning and occasional maintenance and replacement costs). We have deliberately kept the cost very low to encourage all students to use their locker and we think £7 is a very good deal – many schools charge considerably more (up to £40 per year!).

In order to ensure that your child has their locker available to them for the start of the academic year, please could you purchase ‘annual locker hire’ through the ParentPay shop: <https://app.parentpay.com/ParentPayShop/Uniform/Default.aspx?shopid=1047>

Payment is required by 19 August. Students for whom the school is in receipt of Pupil Premium grant money, may contact their child’s Pupil Premium champion if they wish to request a financial contribution towards the cost of a locker.

Testing

Mrs Foster has already written in some detail [here](#) about the mass testing programme which we need to follow in September. In order to assist the school in delivering this vital service, we are looking for volunteers to help. If this is something that you feel you could offer, please contact the school office. Any offers of help would be gratefully received.

End of term arrangements

The school year will formally end on Wednesday 21 July with students being dismissed from school at 12.15pm, following final end of year assemblies and celebrations. Students have been asked to empty their lockers as these will be cleaned during the summer break.

I wish you, your family and the whole community a peaceful, safe and restorative summer break. We look forward to welcoming back the school community in early September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr Johnson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr A Johnson
Headteacher