

3rd April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

It seems strange to be writing an end of term letter when the students are not in school but then again, everything seems strange these days! I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well. I just wanted to take this opportunity to share a few messages.

Easter Holiday Opening

We have three members of staff on standby for each day of the holiday (including Good Friday and Easter Monday). This is for the children of 'critical workers' and has been booked with us in advance. I am grateful to our staff volunteers for giving up this time to come and help provide the necessary childcare. The canteen will not be open during the holiday and those students who have booked in will need to bring their own packed lunch.

Free School Meals

We have written to all families where students already have an entitlement to free school meals. They are going to be able to benefit from a Government Voucher Scheme worth £15 per eligible child per week. It is only available for students who are registered to receive free school meals. If you are not currently registered, but think this could apply to you, our website has all the information that you require and will explain how you can apply. Here is the link: <https://www.budmouth-aspirations.org/parents-information/free-school-meals/>. If you have any questions about free school meals, Lucy Vincent will be happy to help you: lvincent@budmouth-aspirations.org.

Social Distancing

Local media has reported this week that some young people in Weymouth have been found to be ignoring the Government rules. Specifically, concern has been raised about groups of teenagers meeting together in large numbers in an area that has been highlighted as 'The Marsh'. I know how hard it is for our children to not be allowed out as normal and to carry on with their everyday lives, however, it is essential that they stick to the rules for their own safety and the safety of others. One 30 minute period of exercise per day is encouraged, but this should not take place in a group. Please help our local Police by keeping your children safe and ensuring they stay at home.

All local schools have been asked to share this message ahead of the holiday period. In line with this, no children should be coming onto the Budmouth Academy site over the Easter period to 'play'. Thank you for your support with this.

E-Safety

In the current situation, our students are having to spend a greater amount of time 'online' than they would normally. Mr Hoffmann is sending out a separate letter which has some important messages about 'E-Safety' and I hope that you find this information useful. The online world is ever changing and I know as a parent myself how hard it can be to keep track of this and help keep your children safe.

Student Awards

This term we are in a position where over 1,800 Certificates will be awarded to students in Years 7-11:

- 614 students have achieved a Bronze or Silver Award for 100% or excellent Attendance
- 181 students have achieved a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award for Achievement
- 478 students have achieved the Silver Zero Hero Award and a further 582 students have achieved a Bronze Zero Hero Award.

Parents/Carers will be informed via InTouch over the coming weeks if your child has achieved one of these rewards and we will keep all the certificates safe in school for their return.

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Students' work

Mr Cavill sent a letter to parents yesterday giving you the opportunity to complete a short survey about the online work the children have been doing in the first two weeks of closure. Our staff and students have also been asked to provide feedback on their experience to date. We will look at the feedback and make decisions about the frequency and volume of work for different year groups for the next phase after Easter. Early feedback has indicated that some students have felt a little overwhelmed by the volume of tasks, although we also have some students who feel they have not had enough. We will do our best to strike the right balance, but please rest assured that as long as students are doing their best that is all we can ask in the current circumstances. It is equally challenging for some of our staff who are trying to set and mark work, whilst looking after their own children. The younger they are, the harder it is! Well done to everyone for doing their best.

We have issued nearly 200 'Virtual Certificates' for excellent work and effort during the first two weeks of online learning. Please note that we would not normally set work for Years 7-9 over the holiday period and this year will be no different. Staff will set some holiday tasks for Years 10-13 to keep them going. Although Years 11 and 13 are dealing with the uncertainty about how their final grades will be awarded, we know from communication we have received that Years 10 and 12 are eager to make sure they are at the right place when it is time to come back.

Communication with parents and students

I am conscious that although most students are very busy working, one thing missing is the chance to talk to a member of school staff. Our Pastoral Support Leaders have been in regular contact with students who we feel might be more vulnerable during the school closure, and this will continue. After Easter, we are aiming for Form Tutors (or another identified member of the pastoral team) to try and speak with parents during the first two weeks and have a discussion about how things are going. They will then agree with you the best way of staying in touch. Tutors will also be making contact with their tutees directly to ask them how they are coping. All Tutors have access to your primary contact number, but the conversation with students might be easier via 'Google Meet' which is one of the apps on our G Suite platform. Please do not hesitate to make contact with your child's Tutor or Head of School at any time; you do not need to wait for them to contact you.

Staffing

At the end of this term we have some farewells to say. It is such a shame that we are not in school to say our goodbyes properly:

After over 20 years, Sonya Parker (Textiles, DT) is leaving and we wish her well in her new role at St Osmund's CoE Middle School and thank her for her loyal service to Budmouth.

Katie Munro is leaving Budmouth to take up an Art teaching post at Magna Academy in Poole. Katie lives in Bournemouth and I know she is looking forward to a much shorter drive to work!

On behalf of everyone, I would like to thank Sonya and Katie for the dedicated service they have given to our students.

Elizabeth Allen (Art) begins her maternity leave and we would like to wish her and her family all the very best.

After Easter, we welcome the following new staff to Budmouth: Nadine Turner and Mal Lea join our Science Department and Duncan Wright will be joining our Art team. They will introduce themselves to their classes via Google Classroom very soon!

NHS and Agincare donations

I know we are all aware of what an incredible job our amazing NHS workers are doing during the Covid-19 crisis. I am pleased to let you know that we have been able to do a small bit to help by way of responding to a plea from Dorset County Hospital and Agincare for donations of protective equipment. Zoe Gardner, our Senior Science Technician, was kind enough to put together some equipment including protective goggles, gloves and aprons and I have today dropped these off to some grateful hospital staff as well as providing some equipment to Agincare, Portland.

And finally...

Thank you for your support this term. When it started back in January, no one could have predicted how it would end. As I write this letter I cannot even predict how the Summer Term will pan out. Inducting a new Year 6 into Year 7 will be quite a challenge! What I am confident of is that with the dedication of our staff, support from parents, students and the wider community, we will get to the other side in good shape. Please stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert