

3rd February 2021

Dear Parent and Carer

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. It does seem hard to believe that January has come and gone already and that the February Half Term holiday is nearly with us. I suspect the word 'holiday' may feel strange to those students who have not been in school since December. However, regardless of that it is still important that they take a proper break when the time comes as we know how hard the vast majority of them have been working over the last five weeks.

Online Assemblies

Myself and members of the Senior Leadership Team have been sharing some important messages via online assemblies in recent weeks. These are uploaded to the students' Google Classroom for them to watch as and when they choose. If you are interested, you could always ask them to share them with you! In this week's assembly Mr Cavill is talking about Remote Learning.

In next week's assembly Mr Hoffmann will be focussing on mental health and wellbeing. We know that the current circumstances present a real challenge to many of our students and it is so important that they are aware of this and can talk about it openly. It is also not healthy to sit in front of a computer screen all day and I do hope they have been able to find time for some daily outdoor exercise. This is another aspect that will be addressed.

This week is 'Children's Mental Health Week' and, as such, we have started a wellbeing section on the school website which offers support for students, parents and carers. You will find links and resources to school information, details of Children's Mental Health Week, as well as helpful links, agencies and advice that can support good mental health for all. Please follow this link to find out more: <https://www.budmouth-aspirations.org/well-being/>

National Reopening of Schools

As you are aware, the national closure of schools at the start of this term was put into place to help limit the effect of what has been called 'community transmission'. Although the belief is that young people are much less susceptible to the potential effects of Covid-19, there was a significant concern that they might be acting as carriers of the virus, even if they were 'asymptomatic' and unaware they had it. At the start of term we were told that the initial period of closure would last until the end of this half term. However, you may have seen that last week the Prime Minister confirmed the national lockdown restrictions would last for at least another five weeks and that schools would not be reopening immediately after half term. He said that the earliest schools would be able to re-open was Monday 8th March. It was not a guarantee that all schools will re-open on this date and Mr Johnson said it '*depends on a lot of things going right*'. Let us hope that all things that can go right, do go right, and that very soon we will be able to give you notice of a definitive return date.

Remote Learning

Thank you to all those parents who completed a Google Form in response to Mr Cavill's questions about remote learning. This closed yesterday and, in the coming days, we will review the responses from students, parents and staff as we look at anything we need to consider and any potential changes we might make. Mr Cavill will provide some feedback on the surveys in a letter to be sent on Friday 5th February.

Students in School

We have seen a marked increase in the number of students requesting to come into school during this period of national lockdown. In response to a national spike in numbers, the government strengthened its message requesting people to 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives' and said:

'Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can'.

.../

With this in mind, when requests are being made for in school provision, members of the pastoral team are being asked to check not just whether the child is eligible, but also specifically why the child cannot be at home. Given this message, we would naturally expect that the majority of these students to be in Years 7 and 8, as they are less able to look after themselves if they were to be otherwise left 'home alone'. We do understand that there will also be some exceptional circumstances where older students might be unable to be at home alone. Mr Hoffmann is coordinating the provision for those students attending school and will be sending a letter on Friday to anyone currently making use of this provision, to highlight some important points.

Half Term arrangements

The government has confirmed that schools will be closed to all students during the half term holiday from Monday 15th to Friday 19th February.

We are pleased to confirm that there will be the provision of Free School Meals during the February half term, funded by Dorset Council using the Covid Winter Grant. Families will receive a voucher via email to the value of **£15 per eligible child**. Dorset Council will be using SchoolVouchers.com (Wonde) to deliver this scheme.

Please note that Budmouth will be issuing the National Free School Meal Vouchers via Edenred for all subsequent weeks. We will be issuing these on a fortnightly basis, thereby meaning parents will receive a voucher to the value of £30 per eligible child.

Consultation on replacements for GCSE and Post 16 exams

The consultation published by Ofqual on how students might be awarded grades this summer closed on Monday 1st February. Mr Hudson and Mr Henman sent letters to parents of Year 11 and 6th Form students about this. The results of this consultation have not been published yet, but it does seem increasingly likely that some smaller assessment tasks that are externally set by exam boards will form part of the approach of awarding grades. As always, the full detail will be shared as soon as we have it and, in the meantime, students can only be advised to keep working as hard as they can. In my experience it almost always pays off!

School Calendar 2021/22

The term dates for the next academic year have now been set. I appreciate now is not the best time to be making holiday and travel plans but, nonetheless, I hope you find the information helpful. You can view the term dates by following the link below and for ease we have labelled all the staff training days as 'Non Student Days' to avoid any potential confusion:

<https://budmouth.academies.aspirationsacademies.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/02/Term-dates-2021-22-.docx.pdf>

As always, thank you for your continued support of your children and all the staff at Budmouth.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert