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23 April 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write today to introduce myself formally at the end of my first full week here at school. Early impressions of our young people have been excellent. Students from Years 7-13 have been extremely polite and welcoming in early conversations during break and lunch times and also motivated and engaged when seen in lessons. I do want to make a special note of thanks to Ms Jones. Although I have only been working with her for a few months, it's clear she has led the school superbly in this interim period. Ms Jones, along with all staff, have clearly supported students through these very challenging times. It's a well coined phrase, but the past year has truly been unprecedented, the speed of change required by school leaders to keep our institutions working safely for our young people and staff has been immense.

Thankfully here at school, just as in wider society, we will make steps this term and next, as guidance permits, to bring back all those key elements of school unfortunately missing during recent times, whilst continuing to make up for lost time in school. All lessons have now returned to uninterrupted one hour blocks of learning this week and some extracurricular activities will be starting soon. This term, we focus on continuing to help all our young people back into routines for learning, whilst supporting those students in exam years to ensure they are awarded fair and accurate grades, representative of all their hard work. I am not a huge fan of the term 'recovery' - I think it's slightly disingenuous to those who have worked extremely hard remotely and also implies that young people have gone backwards. In some areas and for some students this may be the case, but not for all, and part of our challenge moving forward will be about adapting future practice rather than just a return to what was.

I thank you for continuing to support your young people in following the high control measures in school to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19, so we can continue to be open fully. Instruction from the Department for Education remains the same, so all added precautions of regular testing, face coverings, maintaining space where possible, frequent sanitising and hand washing with additional cleaning continue. The Prime Minister has said "I want to thank everybody for continuing to follow the guidance, and to thank parents and families for the incredible work you're doing to help test pupils through the Easter holidays and to encourage you to keep testing them twice a week as school returns". Full and updated national guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Finally today, I want to share with you part of the message all students received this week, so you can please support from home. I fundamentally believe in working in an inclusive school, and supporting all young people to reach whatever destination they aspire to achieve. School is one of the most important times of their lives – it sets the foundations of skills and knowledge required in later life, but more than that helps develop those attributes which will help them to be successful in

their adult years. None of which comes for free however, and in my time in education, I have worn many hats from classroom teacher to Senior Leader in a wide variety of schools. The constant for student success, in partnership with a great educational experience, always marries with the effort they put in, whether in Year 7 or 13 and I won't apologise for the fact I will expect a lot from all of them. Standards are everything, from the way they prepare for a school day, to their engagement in each lesson, the way they support peers, the manner in which they behave, will all directly affect their outcomes at school. Outcomes are far more encompassing than just grades and I am a firm believer in making the most of each day at every stage of their school career.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, I look forward to working with all of you over the coming years.

Have a great weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mike Lowdell
Head Teacher