



Oastlers School

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Dear Parent/Carers

Thank you all for your continued support in getting all learners back into school safely. All of us here at Oastlers are committed to providing the best education possible for your child, while securing the health and safety of our whole school community. Thank you for continuing to follow public health guidelines and encouraging your children to do the same.

You are already aware of the steps we have put in place to ensure the safe return of all pupils to school. We know that you will be keen to understand the impact that we have had in our first weeks of the term, and what our plans are to ensure all learners catch up with any missed learning, and what will happen if a learner is asked to stay at home over the coming months.

That is why I am writing to you today in order to keep you fully informed. This letter will also be published openly on our website and is being sent to our governors.

School reopening

School opened for our first group of learners from Monday 7 September and our second group from Monday 14 September. The first week has been excellent and the phased return appears to have been successful, allowing for children to adapt to the new and different expectations of school and, more importantly, a managed admission for our new Y6 to Y7 learners who did not experience our usual transition experience. I have been exceptionally pleased at how our learners have returned to school. This week has seen our KS4 learners return, and again, they have been excellent. I believe the phased return has indeed been the correct way in which to bring our community back together.

Attendance

Our attendance for W/B 7 September figures are compatible to this time last year, which is encouraging. Our KS3 attendance for Y7 and Y8 classes was 100%. KS4 was 94%. Sixth form was 74% and Churchill 87%.

Coverage of the curriculum

All teachers have planned a 'recovery curriculum' during the phased re-entry to school which covers all core skills based on creative activities that help to reintroduce learning habits, working together, self-confidence and collaborative learning that has enabled children simply to settle back into school routines again. What we have observed is an eagerness to learn, children are in fact ready to learn, they do not appear to have significant gaps, despite the long absence from school. This is highly encouraging. The 'recovery curriculum' will soon be replaced with our normal planned teaching towards our usual GCSE outcomes. We are in receipt of government funds to help with catch up. As a school we have decided to use the money to appoint a full time teacher to work specifically with individuals who may have lost ground. He/she will be based in the schools Literacy & Numeracy Workshop. That post will be a fixed term position for one year and will be advertised soon. I am confident the position will attract an excellent candidate to support those who have found remote learning challenging and those who need specific support, being identified in school now.

Remote learning March - July 2020

The remote learning via the schools 'Virtual Learning Environment' (VLE) had a significant uptake from learners. 60 learners accessed online learning over the period of 17 weeks during lockdown. Some individuals accessed the site more than 30 times with evidence of some enjoying the site for more than 55 hours in total. Equally, for those learners who accessed the 'care hub', they too were able to benefit from the resources on the VLE. On a positive note, a

number of learners were able to work consistently on the site accessing plentiful work that had been uploaded. Completed work was successfully uploaded for marking. The challenges for some included those who struggled to upload work and some learners struggled with the concept of online learning. Few children did not have access to the technology. Those were supplied with paper based activities. The much anticipate provision of free laptops for some learners came to fruition very late in the period but will serve well for the future.

Remote learning in the future

Due to the success of the VLE, the platform will be further developed to enable all our learner's greater confidence in accessing the work. The school will be looking to develop online teaching, likely through TEAMS, so that face to face teaching can take place in the case of necessity or the event of a further lockdown/school closure. Work on our technology has been instructed to enable this. Essentially, we need to create 'classes' with a teacher assigned to the class so that lessons can be arranged for learners to attend. More resources have been added to the site including a 'blog'. Messages from staff will be important for good communication. Our FROG App has now been added to all our IPADS, which means that during school time learners become more confident in its usage. During school based ICT lessons, all learners will be taught how to use the VLE, to avoid the problems highlighted previously. Our future VLE platform will include easy access for parents/carers.

Mental health and wellbeing

This is our priority as a school. Our returning 'recovery curriculum' is designed to identify, assess and respond to individual learners who clearly display anxieties either about the Coronavirus Pandemic or indeed simply about returning to what may appear to be a different school, following such a long break. Our school counsellor is on hand to support any individual, learner or staff. All lessons have a focus on health and well-being. Every learner will be reflecting on the time out of school and visiting the very many emotions that the Pandemic has stirred and how to respond to them. Learners will be looking at how the Pandemic is affecting families around the world, so that they come to understand the global issues which will help them put their own fears into perspective. Learners will be responding to these important questions through discussion creatively, in all subjects, including art and music where our fears can be expressed through different mediums. It is important to remind children that the school is their community and how we move forward will be with their support. They are certainly rising up to this challenge. All our usual rewards and acts of kindness nominations remain in place so we celebrate individual's successes during the week. Our new Y7 learners have embraced this well. At Oastlers, addressing mental health and wellbeing is not limited to a particular subject or time, it permeates through everything we do from lessons, to break time activities to the manner in which we eat in our dining area. The strength of the school is our relationships and so ensuring these remain strong brings about the safe and secure setting that we are, even during the Pandemic.

Thank you for your support in these challenging times. Please remember to follow both the schools and public health guidance to keep everyone learning safely. I have enclosed a recently produced flow chart from the Local Authority which outlines what is the right response to what appears to be someone with COVID-19 symptoms, and what to do about it.

Finally, I understand that sourcing a test is proving difficult for some of you. This is a concern, but keeping telephoning the 111 helpline who allocate appointments. I am told that new appointments are provided at 8am each day. Make sure you telephone early!

I will keep in touch but please keep checking our website for other updates.

Yours sincerely



Lyndsey Brown
Headteacher