



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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'Excellence for All'

23rd October 2020

End of Half Term Update

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the half term break, I wish to thank parents and carers for supporting the Academy over the past seven weeks. It has been a different and, at times, challenging half term in many respects, however we have safely managed to fully reopen the Academy to all students and successfully follow our normal curriculum as planned.

The students have been key to making this work, by being fully compliant with new safety measures in our building, including compulsory face coverings whilst moving around the corridors, regular hand washing and sanitising and adhering to the new one-way system. Staff have wiped down all desks in their classrooms after teaching each class and students have spent their break and social time in their dedicated year group zone areas.

This approach has successfully ensured that any COVID outbreaks have been kept to a minimum and our attendance at school has been very positive with over 95% of students attending school over the past 2 weeks, which is excellent. I would like to thank all parents and carers for your continued support in ensuring your child attends school. I would also like to convey my thanks to you all for adhering to the government guidance regarding self-isolation and testing, and for liaising with us so swiftly if anyone in your household has suspected or confirmed symptoms. I am confident that this has also been key in minimising potential transmission. With this in mind I would like to ask that, in the event that your child develops any symptoms at any point over this weekend and subsequently tests positive, can you please email office@whitburncofeacademy.org as soon as possible, so we can continue to identify and inform any 'close contacts' to self-isolate.

As you are aware, schools have to be able to adapt to a change in circumstances very quickly and I am confident that we are able to manage this effectively and efficiently, ensuring none of our students will be disadvantaged. When Public Health has directed us to instruct students to self-isolate for a period because of potential contact, we have ensured that students are able to continue with their learning via the use of Microsoft Teams. Our remote learning plan was put to the test in September when, unfortunately, an entire year group had to self-isolate. During this 2 week period all Year 11 students received "taught" lessons and followed their normal teaching timetable. Class teachers were able to talk to students "live" and answer questions that students raised throughout the lesson. The feedback that we received from both students and parents/carers was extremely positive and means that we are entirely prepared and resourced in case this situation arises again.

PTO

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When we return after the half term break, we are going to reintroduce Tutor period at the start of the day for all year groups. This will take place from 9:00am – 9:15am. Students will be directed to their tutor rooms, via their year group entrance. This will reunite Form Tutors with their form groups and enable us to deliver ‘Thought for the Week’. We also anticipate bringing back year group only assemblies, which will allow the Year group to take part in collective worship and further enhance our pastoral care.

Please can I also take this opportunity to remind all students about the uniform policy and the importance of returning to school after half term wearing the correct uniform? Skirts seem to be shrinking in terms of length; students need to ensure that their skirts are worn down to the knees and we do not allow tight skirts or stretchy, body hugging skirts or skirts worn on the hips, plus no unsuitable materials such as lycra. As the weather deteriorates over the winter months, only school jumpers or school cardigans can be worn. When outside both plain black or blue outdoor coats only are permitted. Our uniform rules are very easy to follow and failure to do so will result in sanctions being issued.

The next half term is always a busy and important period up to the Christmas break. Can I remind Year 11 students that they will be completing their Separate Science mock examinations during the first week back after half term. These will take place on the afternoon of Wednesday 4th (Biology), Thursday 5th (Chemistry) and Friday 6th November (Physics). Please use the half term break to rest, revise and prepare for these important examinations as these will be a good indicator of current performance and highlight areas to work on. All other subjects will be examined from the end of November for Paper One for both Years 11 and 13, and an exam timetable will be issued on our return.

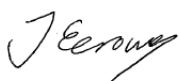
Our Year 11 students are also receiving study support sessions from 3:25pm – 4:00pm to support them in the lead up to their GCSE examinations where they are able to receive intensive teacher led learning in a specific subject area. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory for those students identified and feedback so far from our Year 11 students has been very encouraging. We have also made Food for Thought available to Year 11 students after school for silent study, should they wish to use it.

Can I remind parents and carers not to drive onto the school site at the start and the end of the day? If you do have a permit to drive onto the site, please show this to the member of staff who will be stationed on the gate. If you wish to speak to a member of staff, please phone in advance or use the school email address to make contact in the first instance. Thank you to parents and carers who have adhered to this as we are trying to keep the number of visitors in our reception area to a minimum.

I would also like to remind all students of Kooth.com, a free online service to support the wellbeing and resilience of students. Kooth is a web based confidential support service available to young people. Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people. More information is available on our website: <https://tinyurl.com/y3n8e27f>

The pandemic has been challenging for many of us and we recognise that we need to look after one another both in and out of school. I hope that we are all able to find some time to rest and recharge over the forthcoming week and continue to keep ourselves, friends and families safe.

Yours faithfully



J E Crowe
Principal