



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

Whitburn, Sunderland, SR6 7EF Principal: J E Crowe B.A. (Hons)
Telephone: 0191 529 3712 Facsimile 0191 529 5569 E-mail: office@whitburncofeacademy.org

'Excellence for All'

17th December 2020

End of Term Update

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of a very long and challenging term, I would like to formally thank you all for your support and kind comments that we have received over the past few months.

When we fully reopened in September, school was going to be different for all of us, in terms of new rules to adhere to, increased hygiene routines, whilst also following guidance from the government and our local public health teams when instructed to do so.

The students have been excellent in following the new rules of our one-way system, wearing masks whilst transient, regularly sanitising their hands and keeping themselves apart in their year group "bubbles." Teaching staff have found themselves in strange scenarios, aiming to keep 2 metres away, whilst helping support learning and progress and having to wipe down student desks during lesson changeover.

I have been asked by Public Health to remind parents and carers to use their local testing facility this week for any children who are displaying symptoms and to inform school of a positive test result as soon as possible. Using the local testing facility will help speed up the results rather than opting for a home testing kit. The best way to book a test is to telephone 119 or visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. I am not aware of any problems with capacity currently in getting a test at a test centre.

I have also been asked to ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a student or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. Please can you email office@whitburncofeacademy.org if you receive a positive test result.
- School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. As our last day in school is 17th December there should be no pupil contact tracing beyond 23rd December.

In line with this guidance, the school email will not be monitored from 24th December, all track and trace responsibility will then be undertaken by Public Health England.

Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



Whitburn Church of England Academy is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (Company Number 07465520)
Registered Office: Whitburn Church of England Academy, Whitburn, Sunderland, SR6 7EF

Remote learning has been used successfully when students have had to unfortunately self-isolate. Feedback we have received from both students and parents has been very positive, with students having the classroom brought directly into their homes! Of course, nothing can substitute students physically being in front of the teacher; however, students have been able to successfully continue their learning with minimum disruption.

Study support has been running since October, identifying students in Year 11 who would benefit from extra study in the lead up to their GCSE examinations. Sessions take place after school and offer a different subject focus each evening. In the spring term we will be using funding from the Department for Education "Catch up Premium" fund, to employ a number of tutors to work with the full age range of students from Year 7 to 13. We will be using this funding for specific activities to support students to catch up for any lost teaching over the lockdown period, in line with the curriculum expectations for the academic year.

Whilst Teams has been essential in the delivery of remote learning and communication between teacher and students, please can we restrict the use of the "chat" function to term time only? This will ensure that both staff and students have a well-earned break over the Christmas period.

Attendance over this term has been excellent. The resilience of our students, the strict hygiene controls in the school along with fantastic parent and carer support has ensured that our school attendance is operating at over 95% for this term. We have managed to successfully deliver the curriculum as we would have done under normal circumstances and mock examinations have taken place this month for both Year 11 and 13.

When I wrote to parents and carers at the beginning of September, I spoke about school uniform being exemplary and is something that I will not compromise on. As the term has progressed a small number of students have had to be reminded of the standards that we set in regards to uniform being worn correctly and smartly. This also applies to the students in the Sixth Form and their adherence to the published Dress Code.

On the first day back we will be checking all students are correctly adhering to the uniform policy and we will issue sanctions and contacting home if any students are unable to do this. Our uniform is simple, smart and affordable. I am aware that some children may receive new trainers as gifts over the Christmas period; however, I do not wish to see them worn when returning to school in January. I really do appreciate support from parents and carers about this, as it ensures that students are ready to learn and are worthy ambassadors of our school.

As we approach the end of a very difficult year I am hopeful, like many of us, that 2021 will be a better year as the national vaccination programme gets underway. We will continue to operate as normal and ensure that all of our students are looked after, cared for and receive an outstanding education provision. My priority is still to ensure that all in our school community are safe and we continue to review our Covid-19 risk assessment on a regular basis. This at times may require us to introduce a change to our normal day-to-day operations at very short notice and I sure that you can appreciate the challenges that this can present. I thank you again for your continued support with this.

As I type this, you may be aware that the media is reporting that the government is now considering a staggered start to the first week of next term. It is anticipated that students who are due to sit exams in the summer will return as normal. As nothing has been confirmed as yet, we ask that parent and carers continue to check our website and 'teams' for any DFE updates that may be forthcoming.

2020 has been a challenging year for us all and has brought into sharp focus the importance of valuing and supporting one another as a community. As we approach Christmas, we have been reflecting on the 'tidings of comfort and joy' that the message of Christmas brings; that the birth of Jesus still brings a message of light and hope to a world that is weary and hurting, reminding us that we are not alone.

Whatever your circumstances, I would like to wish you all a safe and peaceful Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year. I look forward to seeing students refreshed and ready to learn on Monday 4th January 2021.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J E Crowe', written in a cursive style.

J E Crowe
Principal