

Head's Space

Term 5, 2020/2021



I cannot quite believe that we have reached the end of May and the end of Term 5. Where has this year gone?

I am pleased to report that Years 11 and 13 have conducted themselves through the assessments that have, this year, replaced exams with a maturity and determination that has made me very proud. The teachers will now be collating the evidence and preparing everything to be sent off to the examination boards. Each school has had to write a bespoke policy outlining our approach to this year's examination grades, which then had to be sent to the authorities for approval. I am pleased to announce that our policy and approach has been approved without reservation.

Today we have had a special form period with the students to explain about some changes we are making next term (more on this below), but also to explain to them about our 'Perfect 20' challenge for the students. For the first 20 school days of next term, we are challenging the students to:

- achieve 100% attendance for those 20 days;
- not acquire any behaviour points;
- not acquire any late marks;
- achieve 60 or more STARs (achievement points).

We will then use the remaining five days of term to look at the figures and work out which students have achieved the 'Perfect 20' and then reward those students accordingly. We are hoping that as many students as possible do this, so please do everything that you can to encourage them. We think this will be a positive way to finish the year and help the students to focus on their learning as they complete their end-of-year assessments and get ready for next year.

I am also pleased to announce that there has not been a single case of Covid-19 in school for ten weeks. This includes during the last two weeks, where students have not been required to wear masks. At present, in both Thanet and Dover districts, the infection rate is less than 10 in 100,000. This means that the chance of a member of our school community being infected still remains very low indeed. Over 70 per cent of the adult population has now had at least one vaccination, with the vast majority of the elderly or medically vulnerable having had both. This means that, if people are unlucky enough to become infected with Covid, they are now very unlikely to become seriously ill as they are young and healthy. We are lucky enough to live in an area where the Indian variant is not common and it has recently been shown that the vaccine is effective against it. After half term, we will have over 300 fewer people in the school building (as Years 11 and 13 have finished), which will help us with social distancing.

For all of the above reasons, we have decided that, after half term, we will take the opportunity to rearrange things here a little, with a view to enhancing teaching and learning. As you will be aware, since September the school has operated in 'Year Group Zones' in order to restrict the movement of the students around the school. To make this work we introduced a five-minute movement time between lessons (in order to allow teachers time to finish in one classroom, move to another part of the school and set up in another part of the school). We now feel it is safe to revert to teachers teaching in their own classrooms again, where they have all their resources to hand, and remove the five-minute movement time—putting that time back into lessons.

We fully understand that Covid has not gone away, and we will still have many Covid-secure measures in place. In the classroom students will still:

- sit in rows facing forwards (rather than facing each other);
- be required to sanitise their hands as they enter every classroom;
- be required to clean the desks at the end of every lesson;
- sit according to a strict seating plan (so that if there is a case of Covid in school we can identify who should self-isolate);
- remain seated throughout the lesson;
- work in classrooms that are well ventilated due to open doors/windows;
- not be allowed to share or borrow equipment.

In addition to this, we will continue to operate a one-way system and all staff and visitors will be required to wear masks in the corridors and communal areas.

Students will no longer be required to stay in their own outdoor areas at break and lunch time, which means that we will be able to use some areas for students to play ball games at lunch if they wish. However, we will continue to limit the use of the Restaurant in order to help with social distancing.

We are aware that there is a small risk that things may become difficult again with Covid, in which case, if need be, we will not hesitate to re-introduce stricter measures again, in keeping with Government advice.

This week I have received a request from the Department for Education to remind you of the importance of continuing to test at home using the Lateral Flow Tests that we are sending home regularly and they have asked me to stress that this is particularly important over half term. The people who have not yet been vaccinated (i.e. young people) are those who are most likely to be symptom free should they become infected with Covid. It is for this reason that continuing to do the tests is important, as it means that we (and the Government) can be sure that Covid infection rates remains low.

I wish you and your families a pleasant half term. We look forward hopefully to a positive, more relaxed —but purposeful— final term of the year.

With best wishes



Tracey Savage
Headteacher

Dates for your Diary

First day of term 6— Monday 7th June

Final day of term 6—Friday 9th July