



Friday 16th October 2020

Good morning Everyone

1. Extended Half Term Break - Monday 19th October – Friday 30th October Inclusive

As you are aware, the Government has decided to extend the half-term holiday of schools to two weeks, to support the circuit breaker arrangements within wider society which are due to continue for four weeks. The indication is that we are to extend the holiday rather than engage in Remote Learning for the first week as we would have preferred. However, teachers of examination classes at GCSE and A Level will be ensuring that there is plenty of work for students on-line who wish to work, practise and revise in a balanced way over the holidays. I trust you will find this beneficial.

We are conscious that there has been some staff and pupil anxiety this year, and I thank you all for your co-operation with safety arrangements thus far. We plan to clean and rest the building over the holiday break and hopefully to return on 2nd November with renewed hope for better days ahead.

2. External Examinations

There is uncertainty as yet about examination arrangements this year. Initially, Science modules, which were delayed already until mid-November, are to be postponed again and we will keep students informed as soon as we have confirmation of revised dates. I advise all students to work in line with the requests of their teachers. There may be a reduction in some, if not all, examination components this year and Centre Assessed grades are likely to feature highly. Students must ensure they take every opportunity to demonstrate how they meet grade criteria and work hard in all subject areas.

3. Results of Tracking Tests will be issued as early as possible in the week beginning 2nd November.

4. Reminders for Returning to School

When we return on 2nd November, I have made some decisions to contribute to safety still further.

(i) Students must wear their masks in corridors and on buses. We have given out vast numbers of masks, and yet the reminders are required every day for some pupils. We will be issuing a warning letter to those who are being careless and this may lead to disciplinary action or to pupil being asked to remain at home. Pupils who are exempt must wear their lanyards stating they are exempt and must ensure they keep a good distance indoors at all times for their own safety. It is not necessary to wear masks in classrooms, canteen and outdoor areas, so there is no great imposition in school. My thanks to my Pupil Leadership Team and prefects, as well as teaching and support staff for setting such an example to others at all times.

(ii) Students must follow the one-way system and maintain their agreed zones. If they do not follow this direction, or if they do not remain in their allocated zones with their year groups at break times and lunchtimes, there would be implications for a large number of students having to remain at home in the event of any outbreak. The vast majority are excellent at following guidance so I will ensure that any pupil breaking these arrangements and thus putting others at risk, is asked to remain at home.



(iii) PE Activity will reduce in school. This will reduce movement to and from the school halls and the days pupils are wearing PE uniform. Each class will have **one physical session only**, in each week and this will be combined with theory sessions on other days when PE appears on their timetable. Pupils must wear proper PE uniform **ONLY** on the days they have physical activity. They may wear their blazer or a black outdoor coat over their PE uniform if they wish but no other garment will be acceptable and sanctions will follow if any pupil persists. We wish to maintain our excellent uniform standards and ask parents to support us in this matter. If for any reason a student cannot wear proper PE uniform, they should wear their normal full school uniform and may participate in gentle exercise or be exempted from PE on that day.

5. Finally, the tragedy which the school endured this past month with the sudden and untimely death of our Year 9 pupil, Brooke Reid McMaster, has had a profound impact on staff and pupils, especially those closest to her in school, those who taught her directly, those in her community who lived near her – and most of all, on her dear family. We continue to remember them all in our prayers and have put together a box of memorabilia for them, including a beautiful portrait painted by Hannah Harrison, a painting of flowers by Cassie Bonnes and a card, featuring Brooke's own artwork, signed by many of her teachers and friends. I have been greatly comforted by lovely cards and messages from Principals, schools and organisations all over Northern Ireland. Brooke was a student of great promise who truly loved her school – and she will always be lovingly remembered here.

Ruth Wilson

Principal