



Bramcote College

A member of The White Hills Park Trust

16th October 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am writing at the end of a long and successful term to say thank you to your children, and of course, to you too, for putting in such a monumental effort to get students back into school and used to the new routines and expectations we have had to introduce. We cannot underestimate the hard work put in by your children because of these changes and the increased demand placed on them to focus for four 75minute lessons every day, so we are wishing them all a restful half term and hope this offers them a chance to recharge their batteries in preparation for next half term.

The wellbeing and resilience of our students has been a major focus for this term and we have been amazed by how much students have taken in their stride and adapted to the new normal, however, I would like to remind students and parents & carers that the school is here to offer emotional support for students if they are struggling. This support could include one to one mentoring, group support, or personal counselling, or just checking in with a key member of staff to chat about the challenges of getting back into a school routine and being away from home and loved ones for so much of the day.

We have also been mindful of the learning time which students may have lost during lockdown because of the difficulties of working at home, so this term all subjects have completed a baseline assessment with students. This has allowed us to see where students are post lockdown and to see what support they may need in order to catch up and continue to make progress. We are going to be using a range of support for students including our Maths TA, Mr Marsden, Literacy support from our Library and SEN team and of course support from class teachers too. We are also exploring a few possibilities with the new government funding which will be coming into school soon to support students in making up any lost ground.

This year students can use Century Learning, which is a new online learning platform focussing on Maths, English and Science. Student have completed a 'diagnostic test' at the start of each new unit and have been given assignments by their teachers. There are also nuggets of work on 'my pathway' which combine to guide students through a range of work with useful videos and PowerPoints to explain the key ideas. Each nugget takes about 10-15 minutes to complete and many of our students have completed 10 or more nuggets in each of the three subjects in the four weeks we have been using Century. Our super users are up in the 20s and 30s of nuggets per subject! If you have any issues with Century Learning logins, please contact Jo Cooper at jo.cooper@whptrust.org for help.

Academic support is especially important for Year 11 students who will be sitting GCSE exams in the summer term. The government and OFQUAL have moved the GCSE exam dates for 2021, with the exams running from Monday 24th May until Friday 9th July, which is later than usual, so most of the exams will take place after the May/June half term break. Exam boards continue to publish information about which areas of different courses have been reduced / cut out, which goes some of the way towards recognising the impact of lockdown on students.

While we have focussed this term on getting our Year 11 students back into the school routine and completing a baseline assessment to identify areas that need support, we are going to be running more formal mocks in the two weeks between Monday 30th November and Friday 11th December covering all subjects (and in some subjects covering more than one paper). We have taken the decision that we would like students to have some time to recharge their batteries during this half term break and so we will be publishing the mock timetable in the first week back after half term, giving students four weeks to prepare for these mocks. Students and parents & carers will receive a copy of this timetable at the start of next term. Many subject teachers have discussed these mocks with Year 11s already and have uploaded revision resources onto their Teams classrooms. Year 11s can also use Century Learning (for Maths, English and Science) or Seneca (for all GCSE subjects) which are both online and accessible at any time over the half term break to keep their brains active.

This year we have also introduced a weekly Study Skills lesson for Years 10 and 11, initially focussing on giving students the skills to learn and revise independently by exploring techniques including developing their visual and experiential memories of work, to actively engage with revision. Don't be too surprised if your child wants to teach you something they have learned, as this process allows them to retain 80% of the knowledge that they teach and if they teach it more than once, that figure goes up. We have also focussed on the importance of managing stress and using pressure in a productive and well organised way. Next term we will be using baseline assessment data for the Year 11s to create study groups within each Study Skills class, with teachers available to do some small group work and students being given work by their options teachers to complete during these sessions. This time has also been used this term for Year 11s to complete their Speaking and Listening assessment as a part of the English Language course, without having to lose time in their English lessons to do so. Year 10s are going to be moving on to doing some resilience training and confidence building to prepare them for interviews and the demands of starting their GCSEs, which they have embarked upon with maturity and an impressive work ethic!

While we haven't placed the same exam preparation focus on Years 7 to 9, they have still been busy this term settling back into the school routine and completing baseline assessments. Year 7s have done a magnificent job of settling into their new school, making friends and getting used to the different teachers and new subjects, while Year 8s have now got to get used to not being the youngest in the school anymore and taking on the responsibilities that come with this. Both Years 7 and 8 have completed reading assessments this term in addition to their baseline assessments, which will allow us to have a clear idea of which students will benefit from literacy support and which students will be encouraged to broaden their reading repertoire by our Library. We have introduced a new online requests system for the Library, to allow students to get new reading books on a regular basis, as well as a new option for students to receive a 'surprise' book which allows the Librarians to broaden their reading horizons. Finally, Year 9s chose their creative options at the end of Year 8 and so are getting more time in two of their favourite creative or performance subjects and will start to think about their GCSE options next term, with decisions being made in January about which GCSE subjects they want to study. This will include an introduction to some of the new subjects we teach at GCSE such as Business Studies, Psychology or Photography.

This term has placed a considerable focus on re-establishing learning routines and getting used to new expectations in school, and we are keen to explore the potential for more extra-curricular activities when the time is right because we do feel strongly that what happens in the classroom isn't the sum total of what school has to offer to children. This term we have had to be limited to outside activities, with many students being involved in D of E expeditions and some getting involved with our new Forest School activities, however, as the weather changes and we go into winter and the evenings get darker, we may find ourselves limited by these factors.

As the weather does change, I would encourage you to ensure that your child has a warm and dry winter coat and would like to remind you of my letter earlier in the term asking that PE kits are worn correctly, not including hoodies or sweatshirts with large brand logos, but rather, the school PE jumper which is available from Big Fish and Morley's, or a plain black sweatshirt (which may have a single logo on it but no bigger than a bank card). It is small things like this that set the tone for a positive working environment and the high standards we expect.

All that remains is for me to say that I hope you have a restful half term break and that you and your loved ones stay well and safe.

Warm regards,

Heid Gale

Headteacher
Bramcote College