



Marden High School

Friday 4 September 2020

Dear All,

It has been great to see everyone back at school this week, and it has been clear from the smiles on the faces of our young people that they are pleased to be back. There has certainly been a very calm, mature approach from our students and their focus in lessons has been excellent. It was also good to see the overwhelmingly positive response from parents via our social media on the measures we have put in place including the need for everyone to wear face coverings whilst moving around inside the building.

So I have been pleased with how our first week has gone, given the circumstances we are all adapting to, but it will be very important not to become complacent and for everyone to remember to follow the new arrangements we have in place for everybody's well being, which include:

- Year groups being kept separate ('bubbles') to minimise contact between individuals - *respectful distance* wherever possible
- Students and staff wearing face coverings whilst moving around the school, and correct handling when taking off and putting on, and hygienic storage.
- Adherence to seating plans which is essential in supporting the Track and Trace process
- One way system on corridors to assist in keeping year group bubbles separate.
- 'No waiting' zones around gates to avoid congestion and encouraging students to move home promptly at the end of the day.
- Continuing the use of digital technology within school in order to maintain a sense of community when large gatherings are not possible. For example, use of video meeting facilities over whiteboards to deliver assemblies to children in multiple different classrooms.
- Hand sanitising on a regular basis - before entry to each lesson.

To reinforce the message that getting these things right at the start of term is so important, our quote for the week has been from long distance swimmer Lewis Pugh, who has found from experience, that “If you get the basics right, everything else falls into place.” Focusing on the basics does not mean dumbing down to the lowest common denominator - far from it. It is about focusing on the essentials which deliver high performance, and ensuring we are excellent at those things. This focus on the essentials is reflected in the phrase that has become familiar to our school community over the years:

- Show respect
- Take responsibility
- Focus on the learning

These really are the essentials for all of us, and if our students are demonstrating these characteristics, then everything else will fall into place. They will also help anybody to face the variety of challenges that is bound to face them as they move through life, and this was the theme of our whole school assembly this week, which I invite you to watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45Zlwr8PEts&feature=youtu.be>

Unfortunately, where they have not been directly under our control, some things have not gone as smoothly as we had hoped. The Local Authority has made the sensible decision to implement the cashless system as part of North Tyneside's response to COVID19 to end the use of cash in catering outlets. They had hoped to have the system in place by the start of term but unfortunately this has not happened and we are aware that some parents have not received information from the Local Authority that will enable the children to access a QR code in time for the start of term. We have been informed that Catering Services are working to rectify this as soon as possible, and in the meantime we have put in place contingency measures to ensure all students can access food. Students do not need to bring cash into school as the kitchen staff are manually recording what each student has to eat or drink at breaks and lunch, and this information will be uploaded into the cashless system once it is properly up and running, hopefully early next week. The current menu and price list for September 2020 is on our website.

Occasionally, a student may do something wrong - nobody is perfect. We believe that accepting consequences for actions, combined with forgiveness and starting afresh, is the best way to maintain the high standards we enjoy at Marden High School. So we have always had a system of detentions in place for behaviour, lateness and homework, and this has worked well. However, we now need to make changes to that to ensure we have not got students on site after 3.30pm. This means that detentions will now operate from 3.15pm - 3.30pm, supervised by Heads of Year. A text message will go out to parents and carers at 3.00pm on the day of the detention so they are aware that their child will be leaving school at 3:30pm. We hope that this immediate opportunity to improve the situation, with Heads of Year, will help the restorative conversations and sense of hope and agency we want our students to have.

Unfortunately one of the activities that we have so much enjoyed in the past has been hosting guided tours around the school for prospective parents, but sadly this is something we will not be able to continue with, at least for the foreseeable future. The current situation with COVID will also mean that Open Evening will be a digital event and we will have very soon a collection of videos for prospective parents and their children to enjoy. As part of this online provision we will also be hosting a Q and A session as we did for Transition this summer, which will enable parents to virtually 'come along' and ask questions which will be answered live by our staff. Details of this will be published on this website shortly and sent out to primary schools.

Thank you for your continued support.



Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher