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Dear Parents and Guardians,

### **The Forest School Update**

It was a pleasure to meet so many of you during our open mornings, or virtually during our open evening video tour. I wanted to reach out to you all again, to remind you that even though our school is still currently closed to all but key worker and vulnerable children, we are still here to support you and your family in whatever way we can. Usually we are able to invite Year 6 students in to take part in familiarisation days; where they get to know us, take part in secondary school activities and lessons and start to form new school friendships. Sadly, at the moment this is not possible.

I wanted to give you an update about what The Forest School is undertaking to keep students and staff safe during these uncertain times, as some, if not all of these measures may still be in place in September.

Since the beginning of Autumn Term 2020 Forest has been a hive of activity. I am incredibly proud of my students. They have encountered numerous changes to their daily school routine and have shown resilience and maturity. I lead a wonderful body of staff at The Forest who ensures that every child is looked after and through their thoughtful guidance and teaching they have made those changes easier. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know my new Year 7 students during my weekly socially distanced 'Hot Chocolate Friday' with them!

During lessons and through home learning we have been extremely proactive making sure all our students understand how to get the most from our Google Classroom software and are fully prepared for remote learning. We have established safe and secure protocols when hosting Zoom lessons in order to teach engaging, informative remote lessons. Our 100 minute lessons are structured in such a way to ensure students have periods of teacher led learning, class activities and quiet study; teacher's build in quizzes, video and audio clips etc. in order to challenge and embed subject knowledge. They are a very positive experience for students and their structure has provided a seamless crossover from in-school to remote learning. They have simply followed their timetable.

We've been delighted, but not surprised, by how quickly our new Year 7s have become accustomed and very adept at using new technology and software. All students from Year 7 upwards are expected to have a Chromebook with which to work from, and we have a school IT technician to help support students.

Parents are encouraged to work collaboratively with school in order to support students throughout their learning journey. Parents also use some of the same software that students use, for example, access is provided to Edulink - which allows parents to see timetables, see credits, discredits, book parent evening appointments and much more, and parents also have access to the Show My Homework portal, to ensure they are able to see when homework is set and due. This wrap around system helps parents to be involved in school activities. As a parent



of 3 busy teenagers myself I invest heavily in ensuring, as parents, you can follow your child's pathways whilst allowing them independence.

We expect, when our students return that we will maintain our year group bubbles. This means that students are assigned to specific classroom bases, toilet blocks, canteen times and specific playground areas to use. We are fortunate to have a large school and plenty of outdoor space. The Year 7 space is equipped with several table tennis tables, and many students have become really proficient players. It's great to watch how animated they become!

In the Year 9 and 10 areas, situated in our sports courts, we installed basketball hoops and students have a great time taking shots. In each bubble area we have installed outdoor hand washing facilities.

Very early in the autumn 2020 term I made the decision that all students should wear a mask during movement time, in corridors and during break so they were as safe as possible. Again I have been incredibly impressed by all my students who have embraced and respected this new normal. They have been supported by our amazing parent community. We successfully stayed safe with only 5 positive cases at the end of term 1 and had no bubble closures.

In addition to our busy lessons we have also been busy enhancing the facilities of school. We are delighted with our new Football Dome; it's an incredible facility for the school and one that we're desperate to start using properly. We can't wait to get students in there for lessons as soon as we are safely able to do so.

The project was complex but thanks to the hard work from my team at Forest, partners RFC and from WBC, Sport England and DfE we had 'the keys to the door' prior to the Christmas break. We hope, when safe to do so, to invite you in to view our new facility, and hope our wider community will enjoy the benefits too. But of course we are uncertain of when that will be. Online community booking will be available on the Reading Football Club website when Covid allows.

I am sure that through our videos, or if we met in person, I explained to you we also have several other projects beginning. The English block refurbishment should begin shortly, and whilst the school is quiet our contractors will make good progress; a new heating system is also due to be installed. Replacing the older boilers and radiators will allow us to be much more energy efficient. On that note we are also applying for funding to allow us to instigate projects that help us reduce our carbon footprint.

We are already conducting weekly Lateral Flow Tests and staff and key worker students are using our test centre (set up in our school gym). We are pleased to have this facility and we expect to test every student on their return, ensuring that we create the safest learning environment we can and more importantly keep every student in school.

We hope that your son is feeling happy and confident about joining senior school, whichever one that is. We are very happy to chat to you about any questions you may have, or if you have any concerns please do contact me.

Thank you for your continued support, please keep safe, stay in, protect yourselves and loved ones.

Kindest regards



Ms S Austin  
Headteacher