



12th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to update you on a few things that have been taking place during term 3. Usually I write about all the trips, visits, activities and opportunities that have taken place during the busy term. This term has certainly been busy, but in a very different way.

First of all I would like to thank you, the parents and carers, for all the encouragement that you have been giving the students learning at home. It is such a hard time to maintain motivation and focus and we know the students really benefit from your support. Without a doubt, home learning adds challenges and stresses to family life and we are very grateful for all that you do. Even just talking to the students about their work will show you care and they will feel valued. We are aware that sometimes students forget to upload their work, so of course the teacher then cannot acknowledge the effort put in, and nor can they give feedback. We really like to see what they have been doing. If anyone needs a new pink exercise book for next term, there is a red box outside reception on working days, where you can help yourself. A photo of the work uploaded to Satchel:One is simple to do. Please contact tutors help is needed.

I know how frustrating school staff have found this term too and we cannot wait to have all students back in school. We are used to teaching in person and we know learning is enhanced by the positive relationships students develop with staff. Teachers are very skilled at giving students lots of verbal encouragement. They constantly give individual feedback to keep students motivated and on task throughout every lesson. This is very difficult in the remote and virtual world we are currently operating in. Secondary school teachers can be working with between 120 and 150 students every day and doing this remotely and giving feedback via messages/email is quite a challenge. Students and staff, and I am sure families also, are ready for the break from screens.

Lockdown has meant some significant changes to the way we have had to operate as a school. Our investment in a virtual platform, SchoolCloud, has meant that we have been able to hold our scheduled Parents' and Carers' Evenings with Year 11 and Year 7 this term. Whilst doing this remotely is not the same as meeting parents/carers in person, the virtual platform has at least enabled constructive conversations to happen. Without a doubt they were an 'intense' experience for families and staff. Thank you for your feedback after both events. We will be reviewing everyone's thoughts in readiness for our upcoming parents' and carers' evenings next term. We anticipate these evenings will be virtual for the foreseeable future. I am pleased that parents found both the booking system and the actual evenings straightforward from a technological perspective.

Year 9 students have just begun the 'Choices' process when they consider which subjects they would like to follow in Key Stage 4. We are keen that Year 9 students and parents/carers have as much information as possible to make informed decisions. Students have already had a 'Loom' assembly with Mr Hunter and subject/course leaders have made recordings where students can find out more about the courses. After the February holiday, there will be a series of LIVE Zoom Q&A events where students and parents/carers can ask questions to subject staff. As you can imagine there is a huge amount of work that goes into making all this possible, but we do not want Year 9 to miss out. Details of all these events are on the school website.

Head Teacher: Mrs P Wilson BA (Hons)

Telephone: 01453 822469 **Fax:** 01453 825615 **Email:** office@maidenhill.gloucs.sch.uk

Kings Road, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 2HA

www.maidenhill.gloucs.sch.uk



The new term will start on Monday 22nd February with a LIVE extended tutor period on Microsoft Teams for all students with their tutor. This will be an opportunity for students to reflect on term 3 and their recent review grades. We made a conscious decision to focus our Review Point 2 grades entirely on remote learning, so that parents/carers were fully informed about how students had approached their lockdown learning. Parents have said they didn't always know whether, or indeed if, work was being completed. Similarly, teachers also can only judge on work they receive. The LIVE tutor period will enable students to share their experiences of remote learning and support each other to adopt even better routines going forwards. No work will therefore be set for lesson 1 that day. Students will be expected to check in with their tutor on a LIVE tutor period every Monday morning going forwards in term 4, to enable a positive routine to the start to each week. Tutors will then schedule a LIVE tutor period later in each week to touch base with students again.

We still do not have any definite information for Year 11 with regard to GCSE grade allocations this summer. If we hear anything directly from the Department for Education about grades, we will of course inform you.

We understand that the Prime Minister will give more information about the route out of lockdown on Monday 22nd February. The only thing we know for sure at this stage with regard to schools is that students will not return before 8th March. We will continue to offer an in-school provision re-starting on 22nd February for those identified students as per Mr Hunter's recent letter. School is closed completely over the February break.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming students back to school as soon as we are permitted to do so. When students return, we hope that they will have the chance to have a Covid-19 Lateral Flow Test that helps to identify anyone who is carrying the Coronavirus without showing any symptoms. This is another way we can all help to keep each other safer. If you haven't yet completed the Consent Form please can I ask you to do so now, using this link:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qjfWx7T-YOqmMtm_ickMFo0nArNAiFxFxNleYthypGdLhUMINIVlpWOVNNRkNGRvUNENaM0FQUTc2VC4u

We would like to be fully prepared with all consent regarding testing in place, so that we can act quickly and efficiently once a return to school opening is announced. Our Test Centre is up and running and students in the in-school provision have already undertaken their two tests. Staff likewise have been through the process. The Lateral Flow Tests have so far identified two members of our school who were carrying the virus, without any symptoms. They were able to quickly self-isolate and by doing so, reduced the risk of transmission to others.

In the meantime, I would like to wish all students and families a relaxing, screen-free holiday. I hope the weather enables everyone to get out and benefit from the fresh air and exercise and students can re-start the new term with a positive mind-set in their LIVE tutor groups on Monday 22nd February.

Stay safe.

Mrs P Wilson
Head Teacher

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