

TLA / JJA

30th October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I trust that all our families in the Alec Hunter community have been enjoying a restful week after a somewhat extraordinary half-term. I feel extremely proud of our dedicated staff, for the expert manner in which they have re-engaged our students with their in-school learning, after such a lengthy period at home, and delighted too with our students themselves, for the resilience and compliance they have shown in these unfamiliar circumstances. On the whole, they have responded superbly to the arrangements in place to make our school Covid-secure, although it has been our intention throughout to make school feel as normal as possible for them whilst also keeping everyone safe. I should also like to extend my thanks to all parents and carers for the faith you have shown in us. Our attendance for the half-term has been 93.2%, compared with a national figure of just 86%, testament to both the effectiveness of our measures and the confidence of our community.

As we enter the second half of term, with Essex currently at 'High' Covid Alert Level, we will continue to review and adapt our practices in line with guidance, as well as listening to feedback from our families. There are three key areas that I would like to draw to your attention at this point:

Uniform

Hopefully, you have read the letter from Mr Edwards regarding the PE plans for the coming weeks and you are aware that **students will no longer be expected to come to school in PE kit on days when they have PE lessons**. From Monday 2nd November, we will return to **normal uniform for all students** and expect all our youngsters to demonstrate the usual high standards of appearance. The mixture of PE kit and normal uniform we have seen over recent weeks has perhaps given rise to some inconsistencies, so we would welcome your support in re-establishing our usual expectations. In particular, **all students should be wearing black leather or leather-look shoes, not trainers, trousers should be tailored and not tight-fitting or made from stretchy material, and skirts should be knee-length. All forms of leggings are, of course, unacceptable**. We reserve the right to send students home to change if they attend school in unsuitable clothing, but sincerely hope that this will not be necessary with your support, so that no learning time is lost.

Ventilation

Despite the falling temperatures, **ventilation in classrooms will continue to be an essential feature of our measures to mitigate risks of transmission**. Our approach to this will be as follows:

- Classroom doors must be open during lessons.
- Windows must be opened during lesson changeover and break times to allow appropriate classroom ventilation.
- Windows should be open during lessons. However, this may not be all the windows and it may not be for the full hour. Staff can make a judgement about the number of open windows and the length of time that they are open, balancing the need for ventilation against the need for a comfortable classroom environment which does not distract from learning.

With this in mind, please may we recommend that you ensure that your child has sufficient warm clothing for the conditions, in line with our uniform rules. An extra layer under the school shirt (a plain t-shirt or base layer, for example) may be advisable, or a plain, black V-neck jumper. Please note that **sweatshirts, hoodies and tracksuit tops are not permitted items of uniform** and are not acceptable replacements for a warm, winter coat which we would also recommend.

Masks

Government guidance on face coverings was updated on 16th October and now states the following:

When an area moves to the local COVID alert level 'high' or 'very high', in education settings where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors) and pupils when moving around indoors, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. As in the general approach, it will not usually be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and they may inhibit teaching and learning.

We introduced this expectation during the final week before the holidays and the vast majority of students were pleasingly cooperative. If students did not have their own mask, we simply supplied one, as they were getting used to the new arrangements, however, this is not something that we can sustain. Therefore, **from Monday 2nd November, we will expect every student to bring their own mask to school.** We recommend a more robust, washable one, as the disposables are somewhat less durable and may break easily. **If a student does not have a mask, we will provide one, but this will incur a 50p charge which will be debited to your child's cashless catering account.** This is purely to cover our costs and is in line with the policy in other Saffron Academy Trust secondary schools, in some of which it has been in place for a number of weeks already. We would much prefer not to have to spend a lot of time issuing masks and inputting these charges, so please assist us by ensuring that your child is suitably equipped with their own face covering.

May I take this opportunity to thank those of you who have sent messages of encouragement and gratitude for the efforts our staff are making. It has a huge positive impact on our morale as we face these daily challenges and do our utmost to keep providing the best service we can to your children and to our community.

Take care, stay safe and thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Trevor Lawn
Headteacher