

26 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I want to start this letter by thanking you for all of the support you have given to your child or children as well as all of the support you have given to the school this term. There is no doubt that this term has provided us all with many challenges and overall, despite everything, for most it has gone very well. We finish school today for the Easter break and are due to return to school on Monday 12 April. I thought it would be a good opportunity to write to you to provide a brief update about a number of aspects.

Behaviour in School

I have been very pleased with how well the students returned to school and how quickly they settled into the routines in school. On Tuesday 9th March, I spoke to all students and explained what my expectations were with regards to their conduct in school. The vast majority of students have behaved brilliantly and they have approached their work with great determination. Although a few students have fallen below our expectations and required us to impose sanctions, these incidents have been very rare. I will be taking a whole-school, virtual assembly on Monday 12th April to welcome students back and remind them about what is required of them.

Polo Shirts

I recently wrote to you to update you about the Summer Polo shirt. I would like to remind you that Summer 2021 will be the final year that the polo shirt will form part of the school uniform. The polo shirt is completely optional, families who do not currently possess a polo shirt do not need to feel obliged to purchase one. Students will be required to wear a school jumper if they are cold and cannot just wear a coat on top of their polo shirt.

Coats in Classrooms

In line with our risk assessment we have to have our classrooms well-ventilated. At times this has meant that despite our best efforts to keep classrooms warm, there have been times when the temperature outside has meant that the rooms are colder than normal. We have allowed students to wear coats inside, as long as they also had their school jumper on. From Monday 12th April, with the anticipated warmer weather, the expectations will be that students will not wear coats inside classrooms. We have previously advised students who want to keep warmer that the best way to do this is by increasing the number of layers they wear to school. Students who often feel colder than others are advised to wear plain, light coloured vests and/or t-shirts below their school shirt and then their jumper.

Hoodies

Please note "hoodies" should not be worn in school at all. This includes on days where students have PE. A plain black sweatshirt with small, discrete logos or no logos can be worn, but only as part of the PE kit and students are reminded that in other lessons they can wear their school jumper on days that they are in PE kit.

Water bottles

As we anticipate the arrival of improved weather it is important for students to remember to bring a water bottle to school. We will continue to provide water for students to top up their bottles at break and lunchtimes.

Pastoral Care Arrangements

You will be aware that we have been reviewing our arrangements for Pastoral Care. In particular we have found that having a Year Group system that has been in place since September because of our Covid bubble arrangements has proven to be beneficial. I am pleased that when we have gathered views from staff and students the vast majority are in favour of moving to this arrangement permanently. Most of the parents who responded to the questionnaire about this also favour the current model. This is not to say that we intend to keep students separated from other year groups long term. As the Covid risk reduces we hope the guidance for schools will enable year group mixing to take place again. Finally, I want to reassure you that I do not intend to completely forget the House system; rather I have found schools who have made this change managed to keep aspects of the House system too. I intend to achieve this for our school too and expect that there will continue to be lots of cross-curricular competitions that link to the Houses.

Coronavirus Testing

An important part of our attempts to prevent the coronavirus spreading has been the testing using Lateral Flow Devices. We have provided all students in school today with another pack of home tests. Please ensure that where possible testing is carried out at home twice weekly, including throughout the Easter holidays. For ease, I would encourage the testing to be completed every Sunday and Wednesday evening. Please continue to register the test results using the schools [form](#) and by registering the result on the NHS [website](#).

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a relaxing Easter break.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Essex', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr S Essex