

Our Ref: RBR/SLT/FSC-2310

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I think you must dread any communication coming from school at the moment in case it brings news of positive cases and a partial or full school closure. Thankfully, I am writing to you as part of my regular communication with home and there is no need to worry!

I've never been prouder of my staff and our wonderful students than over the last eight weeks. We have never had times in school as testing as these and to see the resilience everyone is showing and the quality of learning in difficult circumstances is sometimes overwhelming.

To see us as the lead story on Look North last Friday night was just superb; the passion with which Darcey, Chloe, Olivia, Leona, Hayden and Evie all spoke was clear to see. Many of the tumultuous events of 2020 have happened whilst our students have been at home, away from the teachers who can put the events into context and explain why people act in the ways they do. Mr Ladbury recognised this in regards to the Black Lives Matter campaign, and with the support of Miss Sach, produced a wealth of resources designed to educate, inform and challenge our students whilst they were in lockdown. We're really impressed that this has been picked up by the BBC and I'm very pleased that the work of our students and staff to combat prejudice, ignorance and discrimination has been recognised.

### **Covid-19**

This week, I have spent time in my role as Local Leader of Education, speaking to other Head Teachers in our area and reviewing their schools. It is clear every secondary school is facing disruption due to positive test results. Indeed, when I think about my own children, I have one at secondary school who has been sent home to self-isolate due to a positive test in his bubble; one at Sixth Form who is only allowed into college on alternate weeks; and one at university who hasn't had any face-to-face teaching since March.

The situation is serious and still getting worse - it is inevitable we will have more positive cases at Baysgarth and our children will face further disruption. Thankfully, due to the protective measures we have in place around the school, and the quick response from my team, we have been able to limit disruption over recent weeks. This week for example, we were informed that a member of our school community had tested positive at 7.30pm on Tuesday night and by 8.30pm my team had identified all close contacts, contacted them by phone, text and letter, and made sure they didn't come into school the next day to protect the rest of the school. This makes me proud and means that the vast majority of students can carry on with their learning in school as 'normal'.

We are fully committed to keeping the school open to as many students as possible throughout the crisis. We do not expect to introduce rotas again or send whole year groups home. The measures we have put in place allow us to do our own Baysgarth track and trace, which means only close contacts need to be sent home, thus limiting the disruption to small groups of students at any one time. Any student who tests positive or is sent home to self-isolate will have remote learning in place from day one.

As parents and carers, you can still do your bit to support us by reiterating those key messages, particularly about wearing masks and sticking to seating plans on the buses. Bus journeys are the most dangerous time for possible infection spread and we have to rely on the students taking responsibility for themselves to protect those around them.

## **Home School Communication**

Covid-19 has meant that we can't run Parents' Evenings as usual this year. Therefore, we have worked really hard on our home school communication so that you receive as much information as possible from the school.

Three-quarters of our parents and carers have now signed up to receive the weekly email summaries of the work set for their child(ren) on Google Classroom. This summary includes all the information that has been posted by your child(ren)'s teachers, so it is a really useful tool for you to support them to make sure deadlines are met. If you haven't signed up yet, please do so as soon as possible so that we can work together in partnership to make the most of your child's education. Simply accept the invite emailed to you to opt-in.

We have also tasked our staff with making more contact home, principally by phone calls, but also with postcards and emails, to let you know how your child is progressing, to pass on praise for the good work they are doing and to let you know if there are any concerns. We hope you appreciate this improved level of contact between parents and teachers. I want to thank you as well for your many messages of support - these are always shared with the whole staff and give us a huge morale boost during the difficult times.

It's been a real challenge to support prospective parents with helping them make their choice of secondary school this year and we've made it our mission to give them a sense of the strength of the Baysgarth community with our Open Events. All of our departments have made fantastic contributions, as have our student leaders. The quality and quantity of information we have produced far exceeds anything shared by any other school in the area, and we've had lots of fantastic feedback from parents and children who will be joining Baysgarth next September. Well done to the Arts team whose presentations were voted the best by our parents and students. You can see all of the Open Events information on our website [here](#) (from the homepage, click 'Parents' along the top bar and then 'Open Event').

## **Successes**

With so much of our time and focus taken up by Covid-19, it's sometimes difficult to take a step back and remind ourselves of the many achievements and successes that have happened at Baysgarth over the last couple of months. Our strong team continues to drive the school forwards under the most challenging circumstances.

We successfully bid for £35,000 worth of funding from the Edge Foundation and this, together with money generously donated by Wren, will be used to develop our employability skills programme and work experience offer. With so much economic uncertainty, never has it been more important for our students to develop their transferable skills and make sure they are prepared to grasp every opportunity in the world of work. To this end, we have also launched our Year 9 Gateway Curriculum, where all of our subjects for the whole of this term in Year 9 are dedicated to developing employability skills.

Our Collective Reading strategy is proving to be a real success, and it's lovely to walk round the school at tutor time and see students totally engrossed in a book. Research shows that our children's life chances are massively increased by having a wide vocabulary that they can use confidently, and the best way to achieve this is through reading. We encourage all of our families to set an example for their children by reading for pleasure in front of them on a regular basis and talking about the books you are reading.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, we have delivered all of the building projects on time. The new Science lab opened on time in September, the Dance Studio opened on time at the beginning of October and the extension to the canteen will open on time straight after half term. We had a meeting with the Local Authority yesterday where we confirmed the expansion plans for next summer. By the end of 2021 we will have a new six-classroom teaching block built and opened, allowing us to take more students into our school as our community continues to grow.

This growth of our school community from only 700 students four years ago to what will be 1,000 students in a couple of years' time, causes us some unexpected problems. One of those is that our Houses now contain too many students to fit into our Hall for assemblies and celebrations. These are an integral part of our school community so we are going to use this year to transition from four Houses to five. You'll receive a separate letter today going into a bit more detail about this and giving you the chance to have your say on one of the biggest decisions we will be making this year.

### **Home Learning / Flipped Learning**

The launch of home learning has allowed teaching staff to be able to tailor teaching precisely to students' needs and to maximise learning time in every lesson. The support of parents has meant that the vast majority of students are now engaging positively.

Using Google Classroom as a teaching tool is new for everyone and we wish to thank those parents who joined us for the demonstration sessions and provided feedback on how we can improve the experience for students. We are working on that feedback and implementing some of the excellent suggestions ready for next half term.

As part of our Expert Learner programme, we have Flipped Learning for our Year 7 and 8 students. This programme will run online through Google Classroom for the first time and this will be based on PiXL's Game Changer strategy. This is centred around empowering young people to be themselves and is linked to a popular book 'Dare to be You' by Matthew Syed. Students have had an assembly to explain this and the Google Classroom, with further instructions going live over half term. The programme is designed to facilitate discussions and conversations with parents, so please get involved in any way you can.

One of the challenges of providing remote learning is ensuring that every student can access this using a digital device. When Baysgarth is fully open to all its students we have no surplus ICT to lend as it is all utilised in teaching. Therefore, we are opening the ICT suite on a Tuesday after school for any student who wishes to access it in order to complete home learning.

### **Coming Up**

Here's some dates for your diary for the next half term.

Replacing our usual Year 7 Parents' Evening, our form tutors and pastoral team will be making phone calls and video calls home to all of our Year 7 parents and carers, starting on **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November**. If you've changed any contact details, please let us know now so that we can contact you during this week and give you an update on how we feel your child is settling in to Baysgarth and to gather your views about the first half term.

Our Year 11 students, who have been fantastic with their attitude and effort during these difficult times, have their PPE exams (mocks) beginning on the **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November**. They should be revising hard now and over half term to help them give a good account of themselves during the exams week. Now that the government has confirmed they will be sitting exams next summer, it's really important they take these exams seriously and use this as a positive experience to practice for next year.

Year 8 and Year 10 parents will receive their first report of the year in the week beginning **23<sup>rd</sup> November**.

A reminder that we have a planned School Closure Day on **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November**. I know that you as parents have been told about this many times over the last 18 months, but it's worth reiterating as this is the first time we have held a training day during the middle of a term so it's worth another reminder.

### **Staffing**

Miss Grimble has now started her maternity leave and we wish her all the best for the birth of her baby. Her timetable will be covered by Miss Arandle, who is another fantastic Dance teacher and having spoken to her today, I know she is raring to go in the new Dance Studio.

Congratulations to Miss Houghton, who has now successfully completed her NQT year as a Maths teacher after having already established herself as a firm favourite amongst our students.

Today, we also say goodbye to Mrs Harrison, one of our Learning Support Assistants within the Personalised Learning team. Mrs Harrison has done a fabulous job of supporting our students and we wish her all the best for the future.

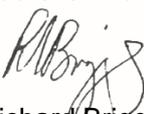
We also bid farewell to Ms Bristow, who has served as a Midday Supervisor for the past seven years. We thank her for her commitment to the school and wish her well.

We currently have three adverts out at the moment: one for a Duty Patrol Officer; another for a Teaching Academic Mentor; and the other for an Employability Mentor to support us with the Edge initiatives mentioned previously. More details can be found on our [website](#) and the closing date for applications is **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November**.

We also have a vacancy for a Parent Governor following the resignation of Mrs Goulthorpe who has been a real asset to the school but has recently been promoted to Executive Head Teacher (congratulations!) and can no longer give the time needed to this role. We will be sending out details of how you can apply for this voluntary position after half term.

Thanks again for your continued support; we hope all our families have a lovely half term break!

Yours faithfully



Richard Briggs  
Head Teacher