



18 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Covid-19 including future testing arrangements, Examinations 2021 including Year 11 and 13 grade embargo, Personal Development Day feedback, Colours nominations, New telephone system

I hope that my weekly letter finds you well. We are approaching a fortnight back in school now and, by and large, our student body are responding well to the new arrangements. It has been another very busy week on a number of fronts as we approach Easter. More below:

Covid-19

It has been really encouraging to see our whole student body take the testing regime so seriously as we are into round three of testing. Under the supervision of academy staff, they are hopefully about ready to embark on their home testing regime. I don't intend to publish details about that here as we expect our delivery of tests for the whole academy today and, at the time of writing, they have not yet arrived. For such a large school, we need to do an inventory of the delivery and we will endeavour to turn these around by year group very quickly, beginning with Years 11 and 13. I will send parents separate year group messages with the correct instructions as tests become available, hopefully on a daily basis once we receive them as the third round of testing completes. Your child will return home with their test kit in due course and will have to sign them out from the testing team. If they do not present at home with a home testing kit, please contact us using the Covid email below and we will try to support you.

If any parents have any other concerns related to Covid-19 in school, please contact us at the Academy using the email address COVID@srpa.co.uk.

Examinations 2021 including Year 11 and 13 grade embargo

I attended a DfE/Ofqual webinar yesterday for Heads of Centre in relation to examination arrangements this year. What has become clear is that, from this point onwards until they leave, grades for Year 11 and 13 are embargoed. This will give my subject teams the time and space to firm up final grades for all students without the pressure of having to share potentially inaccurate grades which can be changed by the examination boards once quality assurance is complete.

What has become a recurring theme this week is that some students are of the belief that they are guaranteed to achieve at least the grade from their mock examination – of course, this is one piece of valuable evidence that can be utilised to arrive at teacher assessed grades, but

it would be dangerous for students to assume that they will achieve a certain grade only to miss out because they failed to apply themselves for the rest of their time with us.

I would also refer you to the Year 11 intervention plan that was published yesterday for further opportunities for youngsters to secure their subject evidence prior to grade submission.

While little other new information was forthcoming, the DfE have not yet formalised their decision as to when Years 11 and 13 will formally leave. This is long overdue and is unhelpful. While I cannot make a decision alone in relation to Year 11 due to the legal complexities of compulsory school age, I can make a decision in relation to Year 13. With this in mind, I have decided to release all Year 13 students at May half term with their last day being **Friday 28 May**. This is normal practice and is in line with previous years.

I will communicate any decision about Year 11 once the DfE have released their position to schools.

Personal Development Day feedback

We have now delivered our fourth Personal Development Day for the year and it is now your opportunity to feed back. We would very much like to know whether these days are having the impact we intend. Our particular focus on student health and wellbeing is hopefully having the desired impact.

Below is a link to a short questionnaire where you can have your say on whether these sessions meet the objectives we set out and how they engage you in that process. Also, we would like to hear your thoughts and ideas on sessions for the future. Please take 5 minutes to click onto the relevant year group and then to give us the feedback we need to develop and further improve the days for our students.

<https://vle.srpa.co.uk/1ca2ed61603b2e31b1c443e839ae0e59>

All successfully submitted feedback prior to 5pm on Friday 19 March will give you entry into a **prize draw for high street vouchers**. This prize draw will be made on Monday 22 March and winners will be informed next week.

Colours tie nominations

It is that time again when I am searching for tie nominations prior to Easter. It has been lovely to talk to some youngsters on duty this week who hope they have been nominated and look forward to the announcement.



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“This is a calm, happy and caring school.”

This is a special tie given out three times a year for outstanding achievements in music, drama, sport, charity fundraising or leadership. These achievements can be part of academy life or part of the community.

Staff have already been asked to nominate students. If any parent has a nomination, please drop me a line this next week via agoffe@srpa.co.uk.

New telephone system

Our new system is fully installed and working well. My note today is to encourage parents to listen to the options carefully please. Our site and facilities team are receiving a large volume of calls through from parents who are pressing the wrong number to connect. As a result, while they will do their best to help, they are not best placed to support you with any parental enquiry.

I appreciate that any new system brings teething problems and would value your support and understanding with this.

This week at the Academy has been purposeful as our new routines bed in and students see what these mean to them. I have been pleasantly surprised by the atmosphere and, it is fair to say, most youngsters seem to be glad to be back to some sense of routine and 'normality'. We continue to work on high level plans for the next few weeks and the future but, in signing off this week as we embark on a new chapter in the Academy's history in returning successfully from yet another lockdown, I am reminded of the words of American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson "Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

I will write again soon.

Yours faithfully



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Head Teacher



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