



23 October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As the first half term draws to a close, I wanted to write to you with some updates. First of all, I want to say a huge thank you and well done to all of our students for the positive way in which they have started the new academic year and adapted to the 'new normal'. As you know, we have had to make a number of significant changes to the structure of the school day so that we remain as safe as possible from coronavirus. It is very pleasing to report that our staggered starts and ends to the day, our year group zones for lessons and for breaks and lunchtimes have worked very effectively.

Parent Meetings and Open Evening

It has been extremely disappointing not to have been able to hold open parent meetings to give you, as parents, the opportunity to meet with me as the new Principal of North Oxfordshire Academy. I am sure you will understand that this has been unavoidable in these first few weeks of term when the safe and secure return of students to school has been our main priority. However, I will be holding online meetings in November and December and will inform you of these dates nearer to the time. It has also been disappointing that we could not hold our usual Open Evening to showcase our fantastic school. However, we offered a virtual Open Evening last week. I encourage you to view the online presentations and video clip of the school in action. North Oxfordshire Academy has much to celebrate and the feedback we have received from prospective parents has been very positive. Our online Open Evening for prospective Year 12 students takes place on Thursday 5 November. A link to this event will be sent to all Year 11 students by 6pm on that day.

Parents' Consultation Days and Evenings

I am very aware that current government restrictions will most likely mean that our planned Parents' Consultation Days and Evenings will not take place in the usual way. Although this is unavoidable, we appreciate that this is very disappointing for you. We have made contact with all parents of Year 7 students by telephone and links to online presentations with information for parents of Year 7 and Year 11 students have been sent via email and text message this week. We are currently looking at an online format for the calendared end of term Parents' Consultation Evening for students in Years 11, 12 and 13 and we will inform you of this format once plans have been finalised. To keep everyone safe, it is worth noting that these days/evenings are likely to be online for the rest of this academic year.

Students have settled back to school well and are working hard. In the event of groups of students needing to self-isolate, I would like to reassure you that our staff have received training in recording lessons and in delivering 'live lessons'. This will ensure that lessons can be shared when necessary with any students who are self-isolating.

A'Level and GCSE examinations and mock examinations

You will be aware that there were no GCSE and A' Level examinations last academic year. Instead, students were given Centre Assessed Grades. In order to give more teaching time for this year's Year 13 and Year 11 students, the government has decided that formal examinations in the Summer of 2021 will take place slightly later than usual with most examinations taking place between 7 June – 2 July 2021. There may be some examinations scheduled before 7 June and we would ask you to ensure that you do not make any family commitments during the examination period. As soon as we have more details, we will share these with you. Mock examinations for Years 11 and 13 will take place in the week beginning Monday 16 November 2020. Mock examinations have assumed a new importance since last year when they were used to inform a student's grade, and so it is vital that Year 11 and Year 13 students start their revision during half term. Individual timetables for mock examinations will be given out this week. The timetable will also be available on our website.



Parent Voice

Your feedback is incredibly important to us in helping us to improve our provision and responses to the 'pulse surveys' in May and June 2020 were very helpful. Our annual parent questionnaire will be going live from Monday 2 November 2020 and I would strongly encourage you to complete this. You will receive details about how to do this shortly. The closing date for completion is Friday 4 December 2020.

Staff Training Days on Friday 4 and Monday 7 December 2020

To give you advanced notice to make plans for childcare, the academy will be closed to students on Friday 4 December and on Monday 7 December 2020 for staff training and professional development purposes.

Staying Safe during the Winter

As we move into Winter, the weather will inevitably become colder and yet open windows for ventilation are an essential way to mitigate the risk of spread of coronavirus. We are currently taking advice, but it is unlikely that increasing heating temperatures will be a solution in terms of effectively meeting the challenge this presents. Please support us by ensuring that your child is dressed appropriately for the colder weather. We suggest he/she wears layers of clothing such as a vest under their school shirt, jumper and blazer. We will continue to seek advice about this and inform you when we have more information.

Reporting Positive Cases during Half Term

I hope that everyone remains well over the half term break. However, if your child tests positive over this period, please can you inform us by using the following email address:

covid-19@northoxfordshire-academy.org Please include your child's name and year group; your name and contact telephone number. This will enable us to act quickly and inform any students or staff who may need to self-isolate as a consequence of this.

Thank you for your support this half term and I take this opportunity to wish you and your family a relaxing half term holiday. We look forward to welcoming your child back to school on Monday 2 November 2020.

Yours sincerely

Alison Merrills
Principal