



Five Acres High School



Ambition – Confidence – Creativity – Respect - Determination

27 March 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Wow, what a start! I did not expect this to be the experience I would get in my first full week of being Headteacher of this brilliant school.

I wanted to take the time to write to you to reflect on the week that has been, and to look in to the immediate future given what we currently know. No doubt, amongst students, parents and staff at the school there is a mix of feelings and emotions about the situation the country is experiencing. Within the ever-changing landscape it is our responsibility as educators to maintain high standards and good routines because we know that this provides certainty and reassurance for our students and staff.

Over the past week it has been heartening to see so many people getting involved in giving feedback about some of the actions and decisions we have made. All of this has helped us to reflect but also to learn about each other and ourselves. We are delighted to see the majority of our students continue with their daily routines, keeping to their lesson schedules and completing as much work as they can within the boundaries of the school day. We also realise this has been a challenge to some. We want to acknowledge that and say that it is okay that not everybody has been able to enjoy these same routines because of their circumstances. We have appreciated the determination shown by many to work around the issues and come up with some really creative solutions to these challenges. As a father of three children at the school I know first-hand how capable our young people are and some of the limitations they may have. I recognise that this is the first time that any of us have worked for an extended time in this way; improvements will happen because of this and we may not get everything right first time but we will continue to find excellent solutions, much the same as your children do in school every day.

To help your child over the coming weeks please can you bear in mind the following:

- Routines and habits offer reassurance and reduce stress and anxiety. Where possible please plan your child's day and show them that there is a definite finish point. This gives them something to work towards.
- Lessons last for 55 minutes, once that time has been reached students can and should move on to the next lesson.
- Work is planned for each lesson and should be dated to signpost students to what is currently due. Google Classrooms holds a lot of extra work so please look for the dates to ensure students are completing the correct work. This will normally be the lesson at the top of the classroom. It is worth checking though.
- Homework is an important part of what we offer. Keeping good habits benefits students not only now but also into the future. We cannot check this in the usual way. We want all students to understand that all work completed is more about building skills, expertise and confidence, not about avoiding a sanction.
- Any issue regarding work should be emailed into the class teacher in the first instance. By emailing into admin it may take a while for the correct person to be contacted due to the nature of remote working.
- Over the coming weeks we will refine our systems even further and provide a series of contacts that you can use for specific issues. We will communicate with you when possible about these enhancements. In the meanwhile, issues should be reported into school in the normal way. The more specific you can be about who you need support from the easier it is for us to manage this in a timely way.





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I would also like to give some further guidance for students in the various year groups as to why continuing to work in this way is important:

Year 7/8: Students in these year groups are developing habits and looking to adults to guide them into making strong choices. Keeping to structures helps them to do this and gives them a fantastic platform for success in the future. A lot of work has been done to help students close gaps and to build a fantastic knowledge base. Keeping habits going and retrieving information through ongoing completion of class and homework will ensure progress continues at a good pace.

Year 9: At some stage over the coming weeks we will be running an options process. Students will be required to start courses in September (or sooner if appropriate). Keeping good habits and ensuring students are working hard to give themselves a strong start is vital. It is also useful to ensure those subjects that students would expect to study in the future take a priority, if effort is not shown it may be difficult for us to justify entering students for some courses.

Year 10: This year group has the most to gain by working hard and keeping to routines at this point. The high-quality resources being provided ensure that students are not missing large chunks of learning that they might otherwise do in this circumstance. By missing sections of work students will be putting themselves at a real disadvantage and guaranteeing additional pressure and work in Year 11 as we try to claw back the learning time missed. Keeping on top of things will ensure this is kept to a minimum.

Year 11: Over the coming days the Government will issue definitive guidance about how they will assess and award grades to students. In the meanwhile, students have an opportunity to show that they are capable of working at a higher level than they may have scored in their recent exams. With everything 'up for grabs' it will be a smart move to continue with studies to give teachers every chance to argue for the best grades possible. Keeping to good habits will also ensure studies in Year 12 whether that be A Levels, Technical Awards, Apprenticeships or other will not come as such a shock.

As you can see, working hard now is not more or less beneficial for anyone, it is an exceptionally good idea for everyone in helping to secure future success.

Within all of the emphasis on work during school hours please don't forget that the school is still offering many of the valued additional activities that occur on a regular basis. Engaging with the reading programme, entering the Fun Friday activities, attempting some of the well-being resources we have posted online and social media will help with keeping in touch with the wider school community.

Next week, being the last week of the traditional term will also see us presenting the 'raffle ticket' awards and rewarding students in the normal way for their engagement with Hegarty Maths and Reading. We can't wait to share the winners with you.

In closing, can I encourage you to stay safe, keep to the guidance given and continue to treasure your children in the same way we do. We look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming months to ensure everyone gets the support and encouragement that Five Acres High School is well known for.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Phelps
Headteacher

