



6 October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are well. I would like to thank you for the tremendous level of support you have provided the school during this most unusual of academic years. After months of meticulous planning, I can report that the school reopening has been a resounding success where our students have quickly adapted to new routines and engaged in high quality learning from day one. Our students deserve high praise for the mature manner in which they have embraced learning in the 'covid-safe' classroom following a lengthy school closure for the majority.

We constantly review our practice at Toot Hill School in our quest to secure excellence in all areas. Consequently, it is timely that I provide you information on a number of key areas.

Cover Lessons

It is inevitable that the need for cover will be higher this term as staff members have to self-isolate because of the 'test and trace' system or because they are symptomatic. We have already experienced higher levels of staff absence than in previous years for this current time period. It should be noted that we have not yet experienced a COVID-19 positive case within the staff at our school.

We continue to prioritise the staffing of examination classes in Year 11 and 13 and our heads of department redeploy teachers when necessary to ensure these classes are taught by a specialist teacher. I ask that any concerns about cover should be raised with the Senior Leadership Team at Toot Hill School.

Remote Learning during Self-isolation

When a child is self-isolating at home but asymptomatic, we expect them to keep up with their learning through the use of MS Teams. Each subject area will have a files section in MS Teams where work will be provided to ensure a student remains on track. In many cases, the work will be in the form of online lessons from the Oak National Academy. This free online platform provides a fantastic breadth of learning activities and I would recommend that families familiarise themselves with the following website: <https://classroom.thenational.academy/>. The resources are also particularly useful as a revision tool.

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'No Hands-up' Policy

Staff regularly ask students questions in class for two key reasons:

- to provide feedback so the teacher can adjust their planning accordingly to maximise learning
- to ensure students remain focused.

If the teacher only relies upon those students with their hands-up, we risk lower levels of student engagement and lesson planning that does not cater for the learning needs of the entire class. Consequently, from Wednesday 7 October 2020 we are introducing a 'No Hands-up' policy. Students will still be able to raise their hands to ask questions but teachers will skilfully ask questions from the whole class in a targeted manner in a drive to improve the evidence gained from questioning to improve lessons. In addition, we are prioritising enabling students to have sufficient thinking and discussion time with their peers before the teacher directs questioning to students.

MCAS

The school no longer uses Insight as a communication tool following a switch earlier this year to a new school management information system. My Child at School (MCAS) is the new online system and whilst currently only sharing attendance information, we hope to improve both the quantity and quality of information shared with you over the coming months.

Home Learning

Home work has been renamed as home learning at Toot Hill School. We strongly believe that this change reflects the value both students and teachers should place on the range of activities completed at home to contribute to a student's learning.

Home learning is now set via MS Teams and so is unfortunately not trackable by MCAS. Parents and carers should ask their child for their username and password to gain access to the activities on MS Teams.

There is always home learning that can be completed by a student in addition to that set by teachers in class; wider reading, Oak National Academy resources and GCSEPod for Year 11 students are all possible additional activities that can add value to a student's experience at Toot Hill School.

Achievement Evening

It is unfortunate that we are not able to run the annual celebration that is Achievement Evening this year. However, we will be acknowledging and rewarding our students for their incredible achievements over the past year in a different way this academic year. We will be in contact soon with further details.

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Social Distancing

I would welcome your support in discussing the importance of social distancing with your child. Whilst our students adhere to our safety routines impeccably during lesson time and when travelling to lessons, some can forget that social distancing guidance must also be followed during lunchtimes, including when students are in the same year group bubble. We have reinforced this message with our students during an online assembly on Monday and continue to do so at every opportunity.

Uniform

The standard of uniform at Toot Hill School is very high yet we strive for 100 percent consistency. I would like to remind you that students should not wear black trainers to school, unless they have a games lesson. Nike black air force 1 trainers are not appropriate school uniform footwear.

Skirts should be knee length. Undoubtedly, there are some girls in school who have outgrown their skirts worn in Year 7 and need a replacement. In addition, 'cigarette trousers' are not appropriate as school wear. Skirts and trousers should all bear the Toot Hill School logo.

Coats

Please note that our current health and safety protocols mean that students line up for lessons outside in the main to avoid bubbles mixing in narrow corridors. It is, therefore, very important that students bring a warm coat, preferably with a hood, to school during the winter months. We are currently looking to improve our lunchtime and break time indoor provision but currently only open these areas when it is raining.

I thank you in advance for your understanding and support with these matters. I also look forward to the day when I can welcome you back into the school again free from concern about the Coronavirus.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Dr C Eardley
Head of School