

1 October 2020

Dear Parents and Students

There are four main parts to this communication. The first part relates to examinations and is particularly relevant for Year 10, 11, 12 and 13. The second part is regarding a Covid-19 update, the third part explains our position on face masks and finally there is an update on parents' evenings; these items are relevant to all year groups.

### Examinations

At present, there is significant uncertainty about examinations for 2021. The government has stated that it is reviewing the date of these examinations and potentially moving them back in the academic year. More recently, the question of whether these will take place at all has arisen as Scotland have already announced the cancellation of some exams in 2021. I feel that there is a greater chance that students will be disadvantaged this year than in 2020. Already, across the country, and in Kent, students in Year 11 and the Sixth Form have had to self-isolate and have had to miss schooling. This creates an inequality in the teaching that some students receive prior to exams. At present, Knole Academy students have been unaffected, and I hope this will continue, but it does not change the fact that the whole process must be fair and equitable. We will obviously inform parents of any changes that are announced, but in the meantime, we ask students and parents to be mindful of two issues.

1. Presume that you will be in school to the end of July and do not plan any holidays or the commencement of employment for late June.
2. If the government revert to Centre Assessed Grades as they did in 2020, I am certain they will want greater evidence to support teacher predictions. This means that all mock exams and assessment pieces may prove crucial in determining your grades. I have asked teachers to ensure that students are well prepared for mocks examinations, but I ask all students to treat these mocks as if they were the real exams and revise thoroughly for them.

### Covid-19 update

As a large number of schools have currently had some form of closure due to Covid-19 (it was 1 in 6 schools as of Thursday last week), the protocols for cases amongst pupils has become clearer. I hope we never need to enact them, but I feel it is appropriate to inform parents of the likely process.

- We will be notified of a positive case within a year group and we are instructed to contact the Department for Education.
- Generally, their advice has been to instruct the year group of the affected student to self-isolate for 14 days.
- The 14 days starts from when the positive case first displays symptoms and not when the school send pupils home.
- If pupils are in school when the instruction to self-isolate is given by the Department for Education, students will have to be collected by parents or carers. If this is not possible students are allowed to take public transport home as long as they follow Covid-19 protocols of self-distancing and the wearing of face masks. We will require an email from parents permitting us to release students to travel by public transport. **Students will not be permitted to take school buses home.**
- Students on self-isolation need to stay at home and wherever possible social distance from other family members.
- Self-isolating students do not need to get a Covid-19 test unless they display symptoms. Even if a self-isolating student were to get a test and record a negative result they would have to remain in self-isolation.

- No other member of the family needs to self-isolate unless symptoms are apparent.
- We will not disclose the name of the student who initially tests positive as the right to medical anonymity precludes this.
- As a school, we intend to offer remote learning as per students' timetables during the self-isolation period.

Parents must ensure the contact details that the school holds for students are up to date. These processes are correct at the time of writing but may be subject to change.

On another note regarding Covid-19, the NEU has produced a website detailing cases around individual schools.

<https://schoolcovidmap.org.uk/schools?id=WP017891>

The link should take you to Knole Academy, it also provides advice for parents and schools on Covid-19.

### Face masks

Our current position is that we encourage students to wear face masks, with effect from **Monday 12 October 2020**, we are asking all students and staff to wear face masks in corridors at lesson change. While Sevenoaks remains very low in terms of infection rate, the cases across the country are obviously on an upward trend. The academy is aware that many students feel considerable anxiety wearing a mask or have medical issues that preclude this; therefore, we are producing some lapel badges for students to wear which will exempt them from wearing masks. Anyone with a known medical condition that precludes them from wearing a mask has already been added to the list to receive an exemption badge, however, if you wish your child to be exempt please send a note to Mrs Barnes who will coordinate the distribution of badges.

### Parents' evenings

We had hoped that we would be able to engage in face to face parents' evenings by January, however, this looks increasingly unlikely. Therefore, the school has purchased SchoolCloud which manages virtual parents' evenings. Parents and teachers log into a single zoom type meeting and the software automatically switches between appointments at the allocated time. I apologise that it is another piece of software that we are asking parents to use but it seems the only way to maintain dialogue between teachers and parents. Please be aware that the software ends the meetings automatically at the end of the time allocation and neither the parents or the teacher can prevent this; for all parents who have patiently waited for overrunning teachers at consultation evenings, this may be an improvement but I feel it prudent to alert parents now. Full instructions on the system will be sent separately. The first event using this system will be a Sixth Form parents' evening on **Thursday 12 November 2020**.

On a more positive note, on behalf of Knole Academy, I would like to thank Mr Gordon Phillips, our lead sponsor. Mr Phillips has been a generous donor to the academy historically, buying school minibuses and supporting the Duke of Edinburgh awards. This academic year, he has kindly donated £100,000 to support the education of students disadvantaged by Covid-19 at Knole Academy.

Wishing everyone the very best of health.



David Collins  
Headteacher