Marden High School

Friday 15th May 2020

Dear All,

As I am sure you are aware, there have been further announcements from the government this week around the partial reopening of schools, including the expectation that from 1st June, “secondary schools and colleges will be able to offer some face to face contact with year 10 and year 12 pupils." These announcements have generated a great many questions from a variety of quarters, including around the validity of the guidelines and scientific advice the government is using. Unfortunately this presents a confusing picture and I appreciate that this adds to the uncertainty of what might be happening in the future.

We have, as a Senior Leadership Team, and with governors, been working hard planning for a range of scenarios, and the safety, and mental, emotional and physical well being of staff and students is paramount in our thinking around any additional people being in school. It seems that there is still more thinking to be done and more conversations to be had at a national level before any detailed plans can be made to bring additional students into school on 1st June. Instead, we are working on a set of principles as the basis for planning any face to face contact we have with Year 10 students at some point in the future when it is safe to do so.

The thanks and positive feedback continues to come in regarding our provision to students from parents and students, and it has been great to see the skills of students developing, perhaps most significantly their independence. Yesterday evening I had a Full Governing Body meeting, and the governors were very keen to pass on their utmost thanks to all Marden staff for the tremendous work they are all doing.

It has also been good to hear reports back from parents and staff of students working together online, using information in a resourceful manner and developing their collaboration and teamwork skills. It has been lovely to hear of the rewards sent out to students in recognition of their hard work and resilience.

I would like to also remind the students of the importance of keeping going with the part, I am sure they are playing, in helping out in the house. Stepping up to your responsibilities as a family member is so important at this time, even if you think what you're doing is a small task. Remember the words of John Wooden, one of the best basketball players and coaches ever: "It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen."

The English department have recently finished judging our Greatest (Short) Story Never Told creative writing competition; they have picked one winner from each class and compiled their compositions into an anthology, and very soon we will be able to hear some of those on this website, so watch this space for some intriguing tales.

I am sure that by now most students and parents will have seen the latest edition of our student magazine Revolution. It really is a great read, so if you haven't had a look yet, I strongly recommend you do this weekend. We are also looking forward to our virtual auditions for Marden's Got Talent. No, not even a pandemic can stop this event, and whilst we won't be able to come together in the Auditorium to celebrate, I'm sure the virtual broadcast on this website will dazzle and amaze us, so watch this space.

With children likely spending more time online, it is now more important than ever to be aware of the risks certain websites, apps and social media can pose, so that we can ensure our children are protected. The Key is a well established and trusted website used by education professionals and they have created a safeguarding hub that allows parents to access interactive guidance on setting up parental controls on their child's devices, as well as guidance on apps like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram and more.

https://parenthub.thekeysupport.com?uuid=ca22738d-d9e2-4258-b04c-c510c2ba3d00

Please remember that there is still ongoing support from the Connexions Advisers who will be providing a telephone and email guidance service to all young people. Young people can use the general number 0191 6436965, and email ConnexionsNT@northtyneside.gov.uk. Advisers will be proactive in contacting those students who are due to leave school to ensure that they have offers of learning and intended destinations, and they will ensure that young people are given advice and information on the range of post sixteen options and support with application processes and transition planning. Advisers can be contacted as follows:

Helen Bishop – 07583 225747 – helen.bishop@northtyneside.gov.uk
Carol Myers – 07964 017069 – carol.myers@northtyneside.gov.uk

In addition to support for leavers, Connexions Advisers will be able to provide careers guidance to all year groups from year 9 onwards. Parents may wish to encourage their children to use some of their time at home for career exploration. Connexions can provide a range of resources, information and learning tasks to support, as well as over the phone careers guidance.

Now that we have gathered information together from students, parents and staff, we have been undertaking a review of our provision this week, and we aim to put in place a few changes to the way we expect students to manage their work which we think will make it easier for them, but also ensure that the quality of work and feedback received remains high. There will be more detail published on this website next week.

As we did for the Easter holiday period, we want to be able to provide some support in terms of activities that children could choose to do over the half term break, at the same time as giving everyone a bit of a break. These will be completely optional for students, but we would encourage the children to get involved with at least some of them as they will be designed to develop a range of knowledge, understanding and skills, as well as the 5Rs. It may be an opportunity for students to do something fun or culturally based around a variety of different subjects, and these may be activities that do not always fit into curriculum planning. Departments will be sharing these activities with students at the end of next week. They will also be available by clicking on the 'Home Learning' button on the school website.

Take care and look after each other.

Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher