



## Duke's Secondary School

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Principal: Mr R Atkinson

JH/BL

06 October 2020

### **Duke's Local Accountability**

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you for your continued support in getting all of our pupils back into school safely over the past month. Despite the current situation it has been fantastic to see all of our young people again and despite restrictions, school has reverted back to being a place where our students enjoy learning and feel safe while they do so. We are committed to providing the best education possible for your child, while securing the health and safety of our whole school community. Thank you for continuing to follow public health guidelines and encouraging your children to do the same.

You are probably already aware of many of the steps that we have put in place to ensure the safe education of all pupils in our school. We know that you will be keen to understand the impact that we have had in our first weeks of the term, and what our plans are to ensure all pupils catch up with any missed learning, and what will happen if a pupil is asked to stay at home over the coming months. Like many schools, we have recently experienced some positive cases of Covid-19. In these instances, we have immediately followed our own school risk assessment and sought advice from the North East Health Protection Team, to ensure that we follow the latest guidance in dealing with the situation.

This letter is to keep you fully informed of the measures that we have so far taken and hopefully to reassure you as to the safety of your child while they are in our school. We will continue to look carefully at the policies and procedures that we have in place and will update as necessary in response to future guidance, legislation or as part of internal ongoing review. This letter will also be published openly on our website and is being sent to our governors/trustees.

### **School Since September**

*Our school day is running as close to normal as we can possibly make it with current restrictions in place. Lesson 1 begins at 08:40 for all students and the day ends at 14:35-14:45 for Years 7-10. Year 11 have an extended day starting at 08:40 but finishing at 15:30 so that they can receive additional lessons to support them to catch up on the work missed through lockdown.*

*Within the school day we have staggered morning breaks and lunches for each year group, and at the end of the day each year group is dismissed at set intervals to avoid large crowds exiting the building at the same time.*

*Years 7-11 are taught in their own 'bubbles', each with a separate entrance from the school yard. Within each classroom there is access to hand sanitiser and desks are spaced apart as far as possible, we have also introduced a 2 metre zone for teachers at the front of each room.*

*Year groups also have their own separate bubble area allocated outside for break and lunchtimes, and an inside bubble area for break times where the weather means that students cannot be outside. Each year bubble also has clearly labelled toilets for their own use only.*

*In line with government legislation, from 21 September all staff and students have been required to wear face masks for travel around the school building. Initially we provided disposable masks for those who required them, but have now issued black fabric masks to all students. Both staff and students are not currently required to wear masks within the classroom environment in order to support teaching and learning.*

### **School Attendance Since September**

*The attendance and pastoral teams are continuing to monitor, promote and support student attendance and dealing with any concerns sympathetically.*

*Below is a comparison between the attendance figures at Dukes's for the first 3 weeks in September 2020, the same period in September 2019 and the last 3 weeks in March before lockdown:*

<b>Attendance for Years 7 to 11</b>			
	<b>September 2020</b>	<b>September 2019</b>	<b>March 2020</b>
<b>Week 1 %</b>	96.2%	95.0%	91.65%
<b>Week 2 %</b>	94.71%	94.4%	91.61%
<b>Week 3 %</b>	91.65%	93.38%	91.22%

*Our figures between September and March 2019 were badly hit by outbreaks of Norovirus in Nov-Dec and then COVID-19. The first couple of week's attendance in 2020 were very positive, but have since been negatively hit by the worsening local Covid-19 situation*

### **Curriculum Coverage**

*We have tried to keep our curriculum as full as we possibly can under the new restrictions. At Key Stage 3 we are offering all of the subjects that we have traditionally offered, with the exception of Food Technology. Our decision not to offer this subject is based solely on our ability to safely room the subject for all year group bubbles, and we have prioritised the use of these rooms for GCSE and A-Level Food Technology courses. We are continuing to run our full curriculum offer in both Years 10 and 11.*

*All of our subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4 have created bridging curriculums to compensate for any lost learning as a consequence of lockdown. These curriculums are based on developing familiarisation with the essential knowledge and skills required for future successful learning, but more importantly are designed to ensure that all of our students enjoy their experience of returning to school. Assessment underpins each of these subject curriculums, so that staff know exactly where each student is starting from in terms of their subject knowledge and understanding and effective support can be put in place if required.*

*Although it will be necessary in some subjects such as Maths and English, for students in some year groups to sit more formal assessments, our bridging curriculums will use low key assessment such as questioning and quizzes as far as is possible in order to support the engagement of our students.*

### **Our Remote Learning Provision March - July 2020**

*Our remote learning offer over this period was based on Google Classroom with each subject providing work that could be accessed by all students through the class areas directly assigned to them. Our home-learning curriculum for Years 7-11 was based on a suggested work load of 3 hours per day, and towards the end of lockdown we also introduced a 'catch up Friday', where no work was set on this day to enable students to complete any unfinished work from the week.*

*Although a series of help videos were placed on the school website to support students who were having difficulties in accessing this platform, we recognised that there were issues for a number of our students in accessing this system. However, many of our students were able to successfully access the lessons and carry out quality home learning over this period.*

*During June & July we operated a series of mentoring sessions for Years 10 and 12, where our students accessed a 10 minute face to face or virtual 1:1 meeting with their subject teachers to discuss any issues or concerns they were experiencing during the home learning period. This was well attended and the opportunity for face to face contact was appreciated by both students and staff.*

### **Remote Learning From September 2020**

*Our home learning for the period following September will still be based on Google Classroom and work for those students temporarily isolating is already accessible for each subject and year group. The amount of work set during any future lockdown will be based on the same provision that they would receive in school.*

*Since the September restart, we have worked with all of our students to familiarise them with how to access Google Classroom, and how to follow home learning lessons in order to ensure that they are confident in their understanding of what they should do in the event of individual or cohort isolation, or full school closure. In the event of year group isolation or full school closure, the school will offer a full curriculum including video lessons using this platform.*

*There are a variety of self help videos and instructions on how to access and use Google Classroom on the school website/remote schooling tab <http://dukes.ncea.org.uk/news/google-classroom-support/>*

### **Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

*From September, students can still access the usual school support through tutor, pastoral heads of year or the Worry Wall that they would have done before lockdown. In addition to our standard provision we have, for this year also introduced KOOH.com, an online counselling support system so that there is access to support when students are at home as well as in school.*

*Staff concerns continue to be raised through our online Safeguard system and our trained Designated Safeguard Leads pick up each referral throughout the school day and we also have a Mental Health lead and 5 THRIVE practitioners, who work with small groups or individual students who have been identified as requiring additional support.*

*Since returning to school in September our students have completed a survey about their wellbeing and thoughts on returning to school. This has been used to assess overall wellbeing and identify any individuals or groups who have been in need of additional pastoral or external support. Our tutor times have also been used to provide our students with information that they need on how to access support should they require it.*

*With regards to transition for our Year 7's who have moved up to Duke's this year, we have kept our Year 7 tutor groups the same as they were in Primary in order to provide continuity and familiarity for the students.*

We hope that this information reassures you about the processes we have put in place to keep your child safe while they are in school, and we thank you for your continued support for the school in these challenging times. Please keep monitoring the school website, Parent Mail, Facebook and Twitter for notifications and updates on policies, procedures and on home learning. Please also remember to keep following both the schools and public health guidance to keep everyone learning safely.

Yours sincerely



Mr R Atkinson  
Principal



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