

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff

As we approach the end of this calendar year, I want to thank the whole of our school community for the way in which it has pulled together through this exceptional period. The global pandemic has affected everybody in our school, and I am under no illusions about the extent of personal sacrifice and economic hardship that Covid-19 has caused those locally. I am therefore personally indebted to all those that have gone above the call of duty, both in school and at home, to ensure that our young people's education has continued in the face of this huge challenge.

### **Changes to Expected Student Attendance**

As you are aware, we recently asked our Year 11s and Sixth Formers to remain at home due to positive Covid-19 cases in those bubbles. Public Health England instructed for those year groups to remain at home until Wed 9<sup>th</sup> December.

More recently we asked Year 9s to remain at home due to the extreme staffing pressures that the school was facing; they are due to return on Mon 7<sup>th</sup> December. Since we continue to face significant staffing challenges, we will be asking Year 8 to work from home from Monday next week until Monday 14<sup>th</sup>.

For your convenience the situation for all year groups is summarised in the table below:

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Update on Attendance Method</b>
Year 7	Unchanged – to remain in school
Year 8	Home Learning from Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> December
Year 9	Return to school from Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> December
Year 10	Unchanged – to remain in school
Year 11	Return to school from Wed 9 <sup>th</sup> December
Sixth Form	

Any students that are working from home will be asked to access their learning via their Microsoft Teams account. Separate details regarding this will continue to be sent to any students that are asked by the school to study using this method.

### **Mental Health Awareness**

Given how difficult it has been this year for everyone I would like to remind our community of the availability of the following resource on supporting children's mental health during Covid-19:

[Parents' Guide to Supporting Mental Health](#)

There is also a 25 day calendar in the lead up to Christmas that may be useful conversation starters to get students to reflect on the events of the last year and provoke dialogue around how our young people are feeling:

[25 daily tasks to improve well-being](#)

### **Government Advice on Forming a Christmas Bubble**

In recent days the Government has issued detailed guidance on how to form a Christmas bubble with family and friends between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December. The link below provides all of the details and I hope that you find this of use:

[Government Guidance on Christmas Bubbles](#)

### **MAT Consultation**

In November a letter went out to the school community regarding our Multi-Academy Trust proposal. The consultation period remains open until January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 and we continue to receive responses via [consultations@abbeyschoolfaversham.co.uk](mailto:consultations@abbeyschoolfaversham.co.uk)

### **Government Press Statement regarding 2021 Exams**

Earlier this week the Secretary of State for Education made clear that exams in 2021 will take place but suggested that they may be marked more generously than normal with students allowed to take some resources into the exam hall to support them. There was also an indication that exams may allow greater optionality in questions given that many students will have gaps in their learning

[Government Guidance of 2021 Exams](#)

At this stage there is no fine detail behind the plans for exams, but it reinforces the need for students in exam year groups to continue their study, attend school where possible and fully engage with learning. I appreciate that this is not always easy given the circumstances, but the implications are clear of the proposals that have been presented.

If you have strong opinions about the validity of any exam season in 2021, I would strongly urge that you lobby your local and national government representatives. Whilst some students flourished under the independent learning during the first national lockdown, there were many that struggled. There is also a great deal of evidence emerging across our country that there are strong links between progress made during the last 12 months and social deprivation; that is to say that not all students have had a level playing field. Obviously, this has been exacerbated by regional disparities in Covid-19 infection rates and knock-on impacts on student attendance.

As usual, we will finish early for Christmas at **12.30pm on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December** and children will be allowed to collect their Free School Meal lunch from the canteen between 12pm and 12.30pm. The first day back in Term 3 will be **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021**.

I know that we all wish for a 2021 that is less eventful than the last 12 months. So, I sincerely hope that this is one of the last letters that I need to write to you regarding disruption to normal learning.

With best wishes to you all during this Christmas season.



Dr Rowland Speller  
Headteacher