



1st November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have all been managing to enjoy the half term break, despite the rather damp weather.

In this letter:

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Thank you to Parents and Carers

I would like to start by thanking you for the way that you have supported the school over the first term. This has enabled Term 1 to run as smoothly as we could have possibly have hoped, and to focus very largely on supporting students in their learning. Our attendance rates have been significantly higher than the national average, and the ratio of merits to behavior points is higher than at the same stage last year.

Students have shown great maturity and responsibility in supporting each other and the community as a whole in relation to the Covid measures, and have applied themselves really well in lessons. We know that your support of the school's expectations at home is a key part of this.

November Lockdown

Following the news of the November lockdown, we know that Term 2 will present further challenges for everyone. However, with your continued support we will do all that we can to support students and families through this very difficult time.

We are very pleased that schools will remain open. However, given the national picture, we must expect that more cases will occur in our community, including at school. This is likely to cause disruption to some individuals, groups or even whole yeargroups. We have clear plans in place for this to ensure that the disruption to learning is as minimal as possible.

We will inform all parents each time we have a positive case in the community, so please don't believe the rumours if you haven't heard it directly from us! We have been informed of one positive case of a student over half term, but there has been no need to identify their close contacts at school as they did not display any symptoms within 48 hours of being in school.

We have not yet been given any further guidance on the implications of the lockdown for schools, including, for example, on extra-curricular activities. As soon as we know any more, we'll be in touch.

It is, of course, essential that students conform to the lockdown rules outside of school. Importantly, they should make their way straight to school in the morning and straight home in the afternoon. This is an important and very visible message of solidarity with the whole community. As ever, the vast majority continue to do this brilliantly, and we're really proud of them for doing so.

Students or household members showing possible symptoms of Covid

It is essential that we do not increase the Covid risk within schools and the community. As schools remain one of the few places of social interaction, we must ensure that we are doing all that we can to reduce transmission.

Government guidance remains that anyone displaying one of the three relevant symptoms should self-isolate (with all members of their household) for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (14 for household members) until they can get a test. These are:

- a high temperature (37.8 C or higher)
- a new, continuous cough (coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
- the loss or change of their sense of taste or smell (they cannot taste or smell anything, or things smell or taste very different to normal)

Please can I reinforce that it is essential that parents do not send their children into school if they, or anyone in their household, have any of these symptoms.

Only the person displaying symptoms should be tested. There is no need for their households to have a test, unless they are also symptomatic. Tests can be booked online or by phoning 119. Once negative tests are received for any symptomatic household members then any children may return to school.

The full 'Stay at Home guidance for households' can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Student Timetables and Timings of the School Day

We will begin our third 'cycle' of the amended four-week timetable on Monday 9th November. Students will be given a new timetable in tutor time on the morning of Monday 9th November. As with previous versions, this will be 'date-specific' to reduce the chances of any confusion. We are also considering a very small change to the times of the school day to extend lunch by five minutes - we will confirm any changes during the coming week.

We temporarily suspended our late to school sanctions for term 1 to enable students to get used to the changes in timings of the school day. Now these changes have had chance to embed, we are reintroducing the system as from Monday 2nd November 2020 to ensure that students are arriving on site on the planned 'stagger' and to access the full learning time available. Full details can be found in the attendance guidelines on our website.

Could parents / carers please remind their children of the importance of signing in at the Student Centre if they do arrive late to school. This enables us to ensure we have an accurate record of who is on site in the event of a fire.

Uniform and Face Coverings

We have been very pleased with the significant improvement in uniform over recent weeks, so thank you for your support with that.

In reviewing the school's risk assessment for the winter months, we have received advice that ventilation in classrooms remains an important measure. Obviously this will need to be reduced given the colder weather, but we will also allow students to wear their Gordano PE/Dance hoodies in place of their school blazer should they wish to from the start of Term 2 until further notice. Please note that only the branded school PE/Dance hoodies will be permitted and uniform expectations remain the same in all other ways, including the wearing of ties. The Sports Shop has good stock of hoodies in all sizes. Any families in a position of financial challenge should contact their child's Head of House.

Please remember that face coverings are essential when students are moving around the site, and are considered an essential part of the uniform. Students without a face covering may be awarded a break time uniform detention. A reminder that students are able to buy a replacement navy face covering for £2 (exact change only) from the Student Centre.

ClassCharts Apps for Students and Parents

Whilst many parents and students have downloaded the ClassCharts app, there are still a significant number that haven't. This is not only really useful for keeping track of merits and behaviour points, but for informing students and parents of any forthcoming detentions. Students are expected to check their ClassCharts app before they leave the school site each day to check whether they have a detention. For any student without a phone they should ask their teacher at the end of the lesson.

A reminder, too, that if you receive a ClassCharts notification during the day, please do not call into school during the school day expecting to speak to the teacher. We would ask that you first discuss the incident with your child when they get home from school, and then make contact if necessary if you have any further questions.

Gordano School Community Fund

This is going to be a challenging winter for all of us, but undoubtedly more so for some in our community than others. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks says in his book *Morality*:

"We need to remember that societies are strong when they care for the weak. They are rich when they care for the poor. And they are invulnerable when they care for the vulnerable".

We feel that it is our moral duty to given additional support to those that need it most and are doing all we can to help in any ways that we can through this extremely challenging time.

In that vein, I hope you won't mind me referring again to the Gordano School Community Fund, which we have set up to allow members of the community and organisations to support our most disadvantaged and struggling families, specifically with access to resources and other support to assist their academic achievement and progression. This could be to assist with access to IT and online materials at home, school equipment or other resources to support them in their learning.

People or organisations are able to contribute through a direct one-off or regular donation, but it is also possible to support at no cost and no extra effort through Amazon 'Smile' - this works in exactly the same as the normal Amazon website (it also now works on the app too), but purchases made through Amazon 'Smile' can pass 0.5% of the cost to the charitable cause of your choice (you just need to search for 'Gordano School Community Fund'). Whilst the contribution of each purchase is small, the cumulative impact of a community the size of ours can be significant.

To make a one off or regular donation, go to:

<https://donatemyschool.com/gordanoschoolcommunityfund2232>

For details of logging onto Amazon Smile, please see:

<http://www.gordanoschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Amazon-Smile-Instructions-Final.pdf>

If you are in a position where you are struggling and you think the Community Fund could support your child's access to resources or support, please contact their House Head. Again, thank you for your brilliant support at this very busy and challenging time. We are staying cautious but positive, and we'd ask you to be the same with your their children.

Please be assured that, working closely together and, as necessary, in partnership with the other schools in the Lighthouse Schools Partnership, Department for Education and with the local Health Protection Team, we will continue to do all we can to ensure we all stay safe and give our students the best educational experience possible.

Although we don't know how things will develop over the next few months I believe that the last few months has shown us the power of working really closely together for the benefit of everyone in our community, which it remains a privilege to serve at such an important time.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Inman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Inman

Headteacher.