



18th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

In this letter:

- Staff farewells
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- Arrangements for the start of Term 3
- Charging for disposable face coverings from January
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Staff Farewells

This Christmas we have a few significant staff departures from Gordano. These include:

- Lisa Webber, Deputy Headteacher, who takes up a position as Deputy Headteacher at Taunton Academy after Christmas. Lisa has been at Gordano for nine years, including the last four years on the Senior Leadership Team. She has been an exceptional Teacher of English and provided inspirational leadership in her time on the Senior Team. She will be replaced by Carolyn Tipler, who arrives in January and who I will formally 'introduce' to parents at the start of next term.
- Shirley Boden, the Headteacher's PA, who is retiring after 17 years of hugely dedicated service to Gordano. Shirley has been an absolute rock to three Headteachers, including myself, and has been a very significant factor in the school's success over that time. She is replaced by Louise Downey.
- Paul Bridges, Teacher of DT, who retires after nearly 20 years at Gordano. Paul is a master of his craft, a wonderful teacher and someone who has inspired generations of Gordano students in DT through his dedication and care for his students.

Together with the other staff leavers this Christmas, we thank them all for their immense contribution to Gordano and wish them all the very best for the future.

Notifying the school of a positive Covid test in the school holidays

If your son or daughter develops symptoms before 3pm on Saturday 19th December and goes on to test positive before the end of Wednesday 23rd December, please contact Charlotte Thomas (cthomas@gordanoschool.org.uk). We will then 'contact trace' staff and students as necessary. We only need to hear from you if and when the test comes back positive.

However, if symptoms emerge after 3pm on Saturday then please contact NHS 'Test and Trace' as close contacts will not need to be identified by the school.

Headteacher: Mr T W Inman, BSc

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Arrangements for the start of Term 3

You will probably have seen the news regarding the start of term in January, involving the government's intention for the first week of term to involve 'remote learning' for all yeargroups apart from Years 11 and 13, and for 'mass testing' arrangements to be rolled out in secondary schools.

This guidance has come incredibly late, is incomplete and seems to generate more questions than it answers. As such, and until we are clearer, it would not be wise to say too much at this stage, as it seems likely that things will change quite a lot between now and the start of term.

However, it does seem clear that schools will only be 'open' to the following groups of students in the first week of Term 3 (beginning on Monday 4th January):

- Year 11 (who will complete their mock exams as planned)
- Year 13
- Vulnerable students and children of keyworker families. This is likely to include students who do not otherwise have access to IT for remote learning.

All other students will be 'learning from home' for that week, with the current expectation that they will return to school from Monday 11th January.

Students that are entitled to free school meals, but are not due to be in schools in the week commencing 4th January, will be entitled to a voucher for £15 for the week. The school will be issuing the appropriate families with a voucher in the same way as has been done for the Christmas break. The vouchers can be used in a range of stores, including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Aldi, Iceland, Asda and McColls and are restricted to food products. Digital vouchers will be delivered to parents' mobile phones or tablets, but please contact the school if you require a paper voucher instead.

I imagine that this will be a fast-moving situation, and would also caution against too much you may read in the media in coming days – we have learnt that this is often not very accurate!

I will write to parents again mid-week next week (probably on Wednesday) with any further information that I am able to share at that point, and we will then communicate again with full details of the plans for the start of term just before the New Year.

Whilst this uncertainty (and its timing) is incredibly unhelpful, we are in a really good position to manage this. The 'remote learning afternoon' last week has given us a huge amount of useful information and feedback about 'learning from home', and we will use this to ensure that the first week of term is as smooth and successful for all as it can be.

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Charging for disposable face coverings from January.

When students do return to school, we will be introducing a £1 charge for a disposable face covering (with the navy washable face coverings still available for £2). The vast majority of students are bringing in and wearing face coverings as expected, but a few are still not taking the responsibility they need to.

Those wearing a disposable face covering should always have at least one 'spare' in case it breaks.

The £1 charge will be added to ParentPay.

Yeargroup messages

Year 11

Mock exams will continue as planned for Year 11 from Monday 4th January. Please ensure that you have read the recent communications from Mr Beesley, and in particular seen the really useful recent update video: <https://vimeo.com/490716888/3171029316>

Year 9

You should now have received the Year 9 AR1 report and a communication from Stuart Rossiter, Assistant Headteacher. If you have not received this, please contact the Data Team (datateam@gordanoschool.org.uk)

Thank you, and Happy Christmas

As we have finally reached the end of this gruelling year my overriding feeling is of great pride; pride in the community for all of your support throughout some very challenging times; pride in all of our staff who have placed themselves selflessly at the forefront of the national response of the pandemic at considerable personal risk, and pride in our wonderful students who, at a time in life where they should be enjoying the journey of discovery and growing independence, have responded so maturely and responsibly given the huge limitations placed upon their lives.

It is, of course, a great shame that we have not been able to enjoy the usual trappings of December at Gordano; the carol service, Christmas concerts, numerous charity events, Christmas dinners and other celebrations. These are, of course, hallmarks of a strong community that values what happens outside of lessons as much as inside them in developing our young people into the brilliant young adults that we see them grow into.

But I think we have seen something very different this year, and even more powerful – the coming together as a community, in looking after each other and supporting each other through these tough times. It may be less 'visible' than a Christmas concert, but is just as important. I have felt the 'spirit' of Gordano more strongly in recent months than ever before and I know that this will stand us in great stead for the challenges that 2021 will no doubt present.

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Whilst this year has brought real sadness and challenges, we will, in years to come, look back on the Covid crisis of 2020 and reflect on what it changed, what opportunities it created, and who made the most of them. And this will be particularly the case for your children – they are the group who will be entering the job market in the next 5-10 years – the landscape they inherit is going to be significantly shaped by Covid; the world has shifted on its axis and whilst there are more hard days ahead, I firmly believe that there is a huge deal of hope for next year and the future.

Thank you to every member of our community for playing your part so willingly and so positively. A strong community comes from the contribution of everyone within it, and we have seen the best of that this year.

Wishing you all a very well-deserved, safe and enjoyable Christmas break.

Tom Inman
Headteacher

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