



CHRISTMAS UPDATE 2020

Dear parents and carers

I am writing at the end of what has been the most difficult year I have known in over 30 years working in education. Last year's Christmas assemblies and parties seem like a very long time ago, so much has happened to us all in the past year. The staff and I are very grateful to you for your continued support and kind messages, which have kept us going through some tough moments! I also feel incredibly lucky to have such a committed and caring staff, who have tirelessly delivered the best education they can to all our students this year, in extremely difficult circumstances. We feel privileged that you have entrusted your children to us in such anxious times - our whole school attendance this term has been over 94%, which is amazing! Thank you.

As you know, we worked hard to provide quality remote learning earlier this year, and we have continued to refine this, enabling students who have had to isolate to remote in to some live lessons in school. This will be part of our offer for everyone should we be told to close to any or all students in January. We are already prepared for this eventuality and will be sending information out if it becomes necessary. All students are familiar with Google Classroom and we will continue to use this platform for homework but also for remote learning. Most of you have already agreed that you wish to access 'Guardian Summaries' which allows you to see tasks set and timelines for your child's work; if you have not yet clicked the link to give permission then it's not too late! Please do so as soon as you can via the email or letter that has been sent to you. Google Classroom is proving an easy and fast way to communicate with classes and to keep parents and carers informed.

We were disappointed to be unable to source sufficient numbers of fleeces to introduce them as part of the uniform before Christmas. We are continuing to follow this up; in the meantime if Santa can bring some warm baselayers to wear under uniform and PE kit, that would be very helpful. We are keeping the school well ventilated but still heated; however if it gets *very* cold staff will allow students to wear a suitable warm cardigan / bodywarmer/ fleece **in addition to** school uniform **and**

a baselayer. Thick, potentially wet coats are not suitable and additional items will be at the discretion of staff if the classroom is particularly cold.

Students have been very good at wearing their masks around school and we would like this to continue after Christmas - ideally their Fairfield mask please, as this is part of our school identity and feeling that 'we are all in this together'. We do have an increasingly limited stock of paper masks if students forget their own so please make sure your child has a back up!

We are sorry not to have been able to meet most of you this term due to the cancellation of parents' evenings. We are hoping to reinstate these for everyone in the summer term, covid permitting. We have tried to keep a flavour of Christmas going - huge thanks to the PTA for their fantastic raffle prizes - if you are a winner you will know how lucky you are! They have been terrifically busy this term trying to raise money to help provide resources for the school; we still have some calendars left in school if you are in need of a late Christmas present! We have also seen some fabulous Christmas cakes baked in school by Year 10 and Miss Batner's Fairfield Bake Off had 56 entries! Please see our website and social media for some great photos.

This evening (Thursday) we are inviting all of you to listen to our Virtual Christmas Concert; we hope it will put you in the Christmas mood and give you a little glimpse into what we have been doing for the past few weeks. It is restricted to Fairfield families and can be accessed via Google Classroom by your child using their gvsc email address. Full details are in the letter sent home via email on Wednesday and on our website.

We are saying goodbye this week to Mr Pringle, who has been our best ever Cover Supervisor and is going on to teach History at Wigmore. We will miss him tremendously and wish him every good thing for the future.

Also leaving us is Mrs Gallagher, who is retiring. She is a talented teacher, caring Head of Year and great SENDCO and will be greatly missed for her warmth and calmness. We hope she will enjoy a long and happy retirement!

As I write the news is suggesting that secondary schools may have some sort of phased return in January. There is as yet no firm detail about this; we will be keeping a close eye on information and we will email you if there are any *changes* to our current plans, which are to welcome **all students back on Wednesday 6th January.**

Lastly, the beautiful Christmas tree pictured at the top of this letter is on show at Dore Abbey as part of the exhibition every day throughout the holidays from 9am -4pm. I am grateful to Mrs Clarke and Ms Demetriou who assembled it, using the lovely photos taken by our students to celebrate the beauty of the world around them, and messages of hope for the future written by our children.

Whilst Christmas this year may well not be quite as any of us planned, I do hope that you will all be able to enjoy time with your families and loved ones. I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas, in the very real hope that 2021 will be a brighter and more positive year for all of us.

Sue Gaston
Head Teacher