



Peterchurch, Herefordshire HR2 0SG | 01981 550 231 | admin@fairfield.hereford.sch.uk | Head Teacher: Mrs S L Gaston

July 21 2021

Dear parents and carers

When I wrote to you last summer looking back on the previous four months, I think we all felt that the tremendous upheaval we had experienced was an extraordinary event that was unlikely to be repeated. How wrong we were! I am writing to you again at the end of another academic year full of 'firsts' when once again our students and staff have shown they are more resourceful, creative, adaptable, determined and resilient than they would have believed possible - and so are their families.

This academic year has not been an easy one on many levels. In spite of the changes we made in the autumn, we felt that we were just getting back into something like a normal rhythm when we had to lock down again in January. And then back into school again in March, with uncertainty around exams and many students and families feeling anxious about not just the present, but the future too. I do not need to tell you about the mountain of additional paperwork and requirements from the DfE in terms of covid safety, curriculum requirements, track and tracing, face masks or mass testing; you will all be aware of those things from my frequent emails to you to alert you to yet another change of plan! In all of this, it is our students who have kept us going; their delight to be back in school after lockdown (yes really!); their fantastic response to online learning and determination not to let covid interfere with their future plans; their willingness to adapt and accept restrictions such as mask wearing and hygiene rules without complaint or fuss has been truly amazing and I cannot praise them highly enough!

We are determined to look on the bright side - and there are many changes which are directly due to covid which we will be keeping and building on, including the following:

- We are now making extensive use of Google Classroom and Google Meet to set and mark work, to teach lessons online and to hold meetings. Parents and carers have special access and can see the work set and whether tasks have been completed. Whilst some areas of the school were already using online capability, the whole school has had to make a huge - and very positive - leap in becoming far more 'tech savvy'; there have been benefits for staff in terms of workload and for students in terms of being better organised and easily able to access materials used in the lesson for support at home. We have also been able to offer remote learning to students who are isolating or who cannot attend school for any other reason.

- We have increased the number of laptops we have in school and been able to make some permanently available to students who have no suitable device at home.
 - We have increased our pastoral contact on the phone with home via tutors and Learning Managers and this has resulted in some very positive links which we will work hard to maintain.
 - We reorganised our lunch system to allow students to order in advance, to offer 'meal deals' and dedicated eating areas for different year groups and have found this works very well, cutting down queuing, minimising waste and ensuring that students get what they want to eat. We will be further refining this system in the autumn, by setting up food ordering via Parentpay. We will write home with further details about this system in September.
 - We reorganised the way in which students line up to catch buses at the end of the day, which has been very effective.
 - We have seen far fewer colds and 'bugs' since everyone became more conscientious about using hand sanitiser and wearing face masks.
 - We were delighted to share our Christmas Concert online with you!
 - We attempted our first online parent/carer evening with Year 10 very recently. The feedback so far from parents, carers and staff has been very positive so we will definitely be extending that to all year groups in the autumn! **If Year 10 parents and carers would like to give us more feedback about online parent/carer evening, please follow this link :**
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGT1lvtTFIBxiVSeOaYIpgEBF-PVUuzfjmyxLSXllg0XPsuw/viewform?usp=sf_link
- We will of course still make opportunities for us all to meet in person.
- We held the Year 11 Prom at school for the first time ever! It has definitely set the bar for all sorts of future events and was a real partnership between school and the PTA, who have been wonderfully supportive throughout the pandemic.

We have of course been disappointed not to have been able to hold the events and parent/carer meetings which were in the calendar, especially in the summer term. The safety and wellbeing of our students and staff has always been, and will remain, paramount. We have tried hard to give our students as broad and 'normal' an experience of Fairfield as we possibly could over the past few months, whether that involved socially distanced STEM or Shakespeare workshops, online theatre visits, music events, the birth of new lambs and goat kids, house tournaments, Euro 2020 form competitions, practical work in Science, Food or DT, the 'Read for Good' sponsored event (over £2500 raised so far - and counting!), Art competitions or DofE expeditions. In addition, subject teachers have maintained high quality and engaging teaching, even when they were juggling their own home-schooling; the work involved in submitting GCSE grades for Years 10 and 11 was significant and completed with the highest level of professionalism.

We have been buoyed up and very grateful for the very many messages of support we have received from you all. We know that we have not always got it right; the online learning especially was a very steep learning curve for us all! However, we do not take your support for granted and constructive feedback is always welcome, even if not everything is possible when you are trying to juggle the needs of students, staff, families, the local authority and the DfE!

I must pay tribute to the wonderful staff at Fairfield, every one of whom regardless of their job, has been an integral part of the successes over the past year. In particular, those senior members of staff who did all the hard work in setting up online learning, the pastoral staff and senior leaders who have all spent many hours in the evenings, during school holidays and at weekends contacting

families for a variety of reasons, planning for eventualities cancelled at the last minute by the DfE and giving up their own time to support staff and students in so many ways. They really are superstars!

This year we are saying goodbye to four members of staff. Mrs Beaton is retiring after 22 years at Fairfield. She has run Study Hour and been a much valued Teaching Assistant - so many students have cause to thank her for all the support she has given them. She will be much missed by us all!

Mrs Ewen is leaving to pursue her dream of paediatric nursing and Mr Thurman is off to train as a teacher - we wish them both lots of good luck! Mrs Bevan is sadly leaving us for a new post and we are grateful for everything she has done to make Food the successful subject it is today.

Meanwhile wedding bells are ringing for Ms Sage and also for Mr Giggle - we wish them and their partners every happiness and good luck for the future!

We wait to see what September brings with a positive outlook and the confidence that we can pretty much deal with anything now! We are sending home testing kits with every student and would ask that you remind your child to test at least once per week. Currently we are being asked to test all students on their return to school; new Year 7 students will receive a separate letter about their testing which will take place on the 6th and 7th September but everyone else will test on Wednesday 8th September which is when years 8-11 return to school. A second test will take place on the following Monday. Please be reassured that students perform their own tests with a trusted member of staff and no student will ever be made to take a test. We have had almost 100% support of testing up to now, and we hope that will continue into next year if it is still required by the DfE.

I have saved the best till last! Following the success of our Christmas concert, Mrs Lown has worked hard to make a short 10 minute video for you. We have tried to give you a flavour of the Fairfield you have missed over these past few months! The music is performed by some of our very talented students from all year groups; there is work from the practical areas, sports day, animals, the Prom and a peek into classroom activities.

You will need to log into Google Classroom with your child's 'gvsc' account; go into 'classrooms', click the '+' and then 'join class' from the drop down menu; then enter this class code: z6em2is.

Please don't copy or share this video on social media; due to copyright and safeguarding reasons we can't make it as public as it deserves to be!

It is our "Thank you" card to you all for another great year of working together - enjoy!

Have a wonderful summer break!



Sue Gaston
Head Teacher