



The Matthew Arnold School

Part of the Bourne Education Trust



25th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Parent update and survey feedback

I hope you are all well and that you enjoyed the snow yesterday. I'll be honest, my first thoughts were not positive (I am not a fan of snow in England), but in fact it was beautiful and incredibly peaceful. It sounds trite, I know, but it is so important to capture moments when we feel positive and keep them in our heads for as long as possible.

I want to thank you first of all for your overwhelming response to the parent survey sent last week. Given that 26% of you don't like answering surveys I can only be grateful that so many of you did! Your feedback helps us not only sort out individual issues, but helps inform future provision for all students and families. I will post detailed feedback and actions on the school website this week and alert you by text and social media when it is available to view.

This future provision aims to take a balanced view of all stakeholders, from the opinions of the students to the latest plans from the DfE. One of the latest concerns in the media and amongst parents, students and teachers is the idea of 'screen fatigue'. Most of us prefer the live lessons to the way it was at the start of lockdown 1, where students were asked to motivate themselves and work independently. I do not want to lose curriculum time or the live contact, but we do need to find a sensible balance if we do remain in lockdown after half-term and possibly much longer.

On that note, many of you will know that it is Y11 parents' evening this Thursday. In order to accommodate parents at such a crucial time, we are running our virtual platform from 3.00 pm to 7.30 pm. Many teachers are already teaching a 5-period day. I am therefore asking staff to set independent work for their P4 and P5 classes this Thursday so that my colleagues do get a break from the screen. I am sure you will understand, and I apologise in advance for any inconvenience.

A note for Year 11 parents only now: we will not be giving out mock results until we know what the government plans in terms of this year's exam grades. You may well have sensed by now that I do not trust him completely to make the right decisions for our children, and I will not have them disadvantaged by publishing mock results as grades if I do not feel this will be in their best interests. We will of course let you and your children where they have done well, and where they need to improve, and conversations on Thursday will be based very much around this.

Many of you commented in the survey that you would like more individual feedback from teachers. If possible, build-in time for this will be part of the provision after the February half-term, but in the meantime, I do urge you to email staff members. If you do not get a reply, please do let me know.



You will be aware that the repeat testing for staff and students in school using lateral flow devices has been put on hold for the time being by the government. However, we have moved to twice-weekly routine testing for all staff and students in school. So far, we have had no positive tests. Whilst I am very pleased about this, it does call into question how reliable the tests are, and we are even more conscious than ever of all the precautionary measures that need to be taken - hands, face, space, ventilation, and of course sticking to the lockdown rules. Please remind your children to do the same. Attached to the email with this letter is a letter from PC Caroline Barnes, Youth Intervention Officer for Spelthorne, which she has asked Headteachers to circulate.

I hope you continue to find the website useful, informative and supportive. The first port of call is the [Spring 21](#) section. Mr Lawrence is really getting to grips with ideas for wellbeing, and he is very keen to make this a community theme rather than just a student one. Please read through the letter that comes with the email with details of the journey to Paris via Strava.

As promised, I will be giving detailed feedback from the survey, but one comment struck me in particular:

“When the school was last closed I was told not to worry as my child’s schooling was the responsibility of the school. Then I saw the end of year progress report and was so disheartened. Now the school is closed again. I feel that the achievement levels will not improve and know that my child has similar feelings on the subject.”

I think many of you are feeling similarly, even though you are being so supportive of the school, and I don’t blame you. Firstly, I think we were wrong to send the reports out in the usual way - nothing about life has been usual for over a year now. There is no doubt that the education of all children has taken a very different path from what was expected. It is for the government (and believe me, I am doing my best to make my voice heard!) to begin to share their long-term views of education and what can be done nationally to address gaps in progress and achievement. What I do want to do is to reassure you: we have already had reviews done of our provision and are offering a good deal more than many. I know we cannot replace children being in school, but the simple fact that your child is attending and listening online, even if they are not able to do much more independently, puts them in very good stead. Please, if your child is not able to do this, let us know! Contact your child’s Head of Year or me and we may be able to help very quickly.

I hope you all manage to stay healthy and that you remain as positive and happy as possible.

With very best wishes

Mary Gould
Headteacher