

7th October 2020

Dear Year 7 and 8 parents / carers,

As we leave summer behind and autumn is now most definitely upon us, I am reminded of the famous quote from William Cullen Bryant who said "Autumn: the year's last, loveliest smile". As the days get shorter however, the smiles around the Dove campus are a long way from ending. It is delightful to see the children so settled, happy and engaged in school.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Year 7 parents and carers who took the time to complete our recent survey. I am delighted to receive such overwhelmingly positive feedback. The feedback has been really useful to allow us to continue to support your sons and daughters. There were a few common queries that I have addressed below. Those of you who have requested a call back, a member of staff will be in touch over the course of the next week to discuss any queries with you in more detail.

Homework - As mentioned in my last update, we are continuing to monitor the volume and range of homework that has been set to ensure that we get the right balance between a robust, challenging homework policy and ensuring we are not asking too much of the students. Please continue to engage with form tutors and class teachers via the student planner. Communication is vital to ensure success for your sons and daughters.

You will be aware that a number of our subjects choose to utilise online learning platforms to set homework. We are conscious however that not all families will have a suitable device in the home to be able to facilitate and support this. We would therefore be grateful if you could let the relevant year team know (via email year7office@deferrers.com / year8office@deferrers.com or by phone 01283 247750) if you do not have access to a computer, laptop or tablet at home. We can then ensure that this is accommodated within the work that is set for your child.

Setting - We received lots of queries about when the current makeup of classes will change. Currently Year 7 are taught exclusively in mixed ability tutor groups and Year 8 in ability based teaching groups. This is to minimise the number of different students they are in close contact with, in line with our COVID risk assessment. This is also why students are currently in the same seating plan for all lessons. This is certainly not our preferred method of curriculum delivery, but I am sure you can appreciate the need to have these measures in place currently to keep everyone as safe as we can in school. As soon as government guidelines allow, we will be able to revert to our preferred curriculum model for both Years 7 and 8, which will see students taught for broadly half of their lessons in mixed ability classes, and the other half in ability based teaching groups.

Baseline assessments - As you will all be well aware, Year 7 did not complete any of the usual end of Key Stage 2 assessments in May due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Having now had four weeks of settling in and establishing routines, students will be undertaking a series of baseline assessments over the course of the next two weeks, which will provide an indication of their current working level. This, alongside formative and summative assessments undertaken within lessons, will inform the setting of students into their teaching groups when we are able to do so.

Lockers - A number of students purchased lockers that as a result of being in the same classroom each day they are not currently accessing. Should you have purchased a locker and your child wishes to utilise it, please ask them to speak to a member of staff on duty at break or lunchtime. As lockers are located in the atrium area which is accessed by four different bubbles to facilitate movement at break and lunchtimes, access to lockers has to be controlled to prevent bubbles mixing but is something we can easily accommodate if desired.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update you on a few other developments:

Harvest - We are currently collecting items for our harvest appeal that will support the excellent work in the local area undertaken by the YMCA, Salvation Army and HOPE. These charities do a fantastic job supporting families in the Burton area. Any donations of tins or packets that you are able to spare would be gratefully received by Monday 12th October please.

Academic Summary - We will be providing an additional academic summary for all students which will be released to parents and carers via the Sims Parent app just before the end of this half term during week commencing 19th October. This academic summary will focus on your child's attitude to learning (ATL) in each of their subjects and will provide an excellent indication at this early stage of the year about how your child has settled into the new academic year. Full academic summaries will also follow as usual at Christmas, Easter and the end of the school year in July. We hope that you will find this additional information of value at this early stage.

Once again thank you for your continued support, and keep smiling!

Yours faithfully

Mr D Lovell
Vice Principal – Head of Dove Campus