

CEC/JWI

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Head of School: Chris Eccles

## Head of School Briefing

Dear Parents and Carers

We are now at the end of the fourth week of this half-term. This time of year is always a challenging time in schools; the weather deteriorates, the daylight hours seem very short, add the national lockdown to the mix and this can prove unsettling for many young people. However, despite this I have to report how pleased I have been with our pupils here at Oakwood High School. On the 11<sup>th</sup> November we marked the Armistice where the school observed an impeccable two minutes silence as a mark of respect during our annual remembrance event. In addition, tutor groups have been working together to produce their period poverty boxes to help raise awareness and provide support to pupils when they need it about menstruation. To encourage pupils to take responsibility for ensuring they are correctly dressed and ready for school, we have had a focus on basic uniform standards; it's important to maintain standards and instil pride in representing Oakwood. I would like to thank them for the respect they show and thank you for your ongoing support.

Over the last few weeks we have continued to try and provide a sense of normality. There has been a full tutor programme: a focus on diversity from the pupil leadership team; an anti-bullying assembly culminating in 'Odd Socks Day' on Friday and preparation for Tutor Review Day on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December. Please encourage your child(ren) to share with you their presentations.

We continue to manage the current crisis in school through the strong protective measures we have in place and our effective contact tracing. As a result of our diligent processes, cases of in-school transmissions have been kept to a minimum and this was recently recognised in a Local Authority review. In the last four weeks since the half-term break, we have experienced only seven positive pupil cases of COVID-19 (two in each of Years 7, 8 and 9 and one in Year 11) and three members of staff; this represents a consistent reduction from before the half-term break in pupil cases. We appreciate that self-isolation causes disruption to learning, however, there is clear evidence that it is helping break the chain of infection and I thank you for your ongoing support and patience with isolation. When pupils are isolating, their learning continues through live lessons, work on Classroom and teachers contacting pupils.

If your child receives a positive test result, I would like to ask for your support. We have had a few cases where pupils have contacted their friends, before we have had the opportunity to complete the contact tracing exercise. This naturally can cause some anxiety for pupils who receive such a message. We will notify close contacts in a prompt and timely manner and close contacts will be notified on the day we receive the notification of the positive test. It is worth bearing in mind, the national test and trace can take over 24 hours. From our experience, pupils who have been close contacts in school, have posed little risk to other pupils and there have been no subsequent close contact infections from the initial positive test. With this in mind, can I ask that pupils **do not** contact their friends until the end of the school day, thus, allowing us time to carry out our contact tracing and reduce any unnecessary anxiety. Thank you in advance for your support.

A member of the Inspire Trust



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I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the exceptional efforts the staff team have gone to since September to keep the school running as normally as possible. Despite the challenges and the risks of the virus, there has been a collective effort to ensure pupils receive quality learning not only in school, but also if isolating at home, whilst remaining as safe as possible. There has been a demand on cover due to staff having to isolate for any number of reasons related to the virus. Where possible, we have managed to cover over 75% of these lessons with Oakwood teachers. It is a privilege to work with our pupils at Oakwood and we always appreciate when parents take time to recognise the work we do as it serves as a morale booster, especially on the more difficult days. If you feel you would like to send a message to support staff wellbeing, please follow the link below. I will then collate these and share them with colleagues before the end of term.

[Staff festive wellbeing message](#)

### **Tutor Review Day – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December**

I would like to share with you our final plans for Tutor Review Day and the upcoming parents' evenings. Having face-to-face contact with parents and their child(ren) is an important aspect of supporting young people to make progress and improve. The current situation deprives us of the opportunity to spend that time in the same room. However, we value the interactions as they help build the relationships and respect, essential to our ethos.

On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December we will hold an online tutor event for all pupils and year groups. This will start from 1.30 pm and thank you to everyone who has already made appointments. School will finish for pupils from 12 pm for Years 7, 9 and 10 and from 12.15 pm for Years 8 and 11. Home-learning will be provided for the lessons your child would have had in the afternoon. To access your appointment, all you have to do is follow the link from the parents' evening booking system and wait to be admitted into the virtual meeting by your child's tutor.

Meetings are time limited and will automatically end after 10 minutes. If you require a longer appointment, your child's tutor will make a note of this and contact you by phone at a later date.

The week following on from the online tutor event there will be the online Year 11 subject evening. Parents will use the booking system to make appointments and tutors will direct parents to certain teachers at the online tutor event. The Year 11 subject evening will run from 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm. This meeting, as with all subsequent subject evenings, will use the same meeting technology as the online tutor event. Each appointment for this event will be for no more than 5 minutes.

The dates of all our online tutor and subject meetings for the full year are below.

<b>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December</b>	Y7-11 Online Tutor Event - 2.00 pm to 7.00 pm
<b>Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Y11 Online Parents Evening - 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm
<b>Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Y10 Online Subject Parents Evening - 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm
<b>Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Y8 and 11 Online Subject Parents Evening - 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm
<b>Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April</b>	Y7 and 9 Online Subject Parents Evening - 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm

## **GCSE Exams Years 10 and 11**

As you may have seen, the Department for Education (DfE) has announced that GCSE exams will go ahead next summer. To help make up for the disruption caused by the pandemic, teachers and pupils will be given more time to prepare for the exams as they have been scheduled later than usual.

Most exams will take place three weeks later than usual. The summer exam series will start on 26<sup>th</sup> May and end on 2<sup>nd</sup> July for almost all GCSEs. To give candidates affected by COVID-19 the best chance of being able to sit at least one paper in English and maths, one English and one maths paper will be scheduled before the summer half-term. GCSE results day will be a little later than usual on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

## **Mobile Phones and Earphones**

Oakwood High School was ahead of its time by recognising that mobile phones and educational establishments do not go hand in hand for quality learning. Over the years we have tweaked the procedures, but we have remained true to our original message; mobile phones should not be seen once school starts for the day.

From time to time, as with expectations around uniform we need to revisit and remind staff and pupils of our standards. Pupils this week have been reminded that all mobile phones and earphones should be out of sight after 8.30 am. If a pupil is seen with their phone or earphones they will be asked to hand them over to a member of staff. These will be safely stored until the end of the day and returned. Pupils who have their phone confiscated on more than one occasion, will be required to have it collected by an adult from the Main Reception at the end of the day.

Although we appreciate a phone is useful particularly after school, there is no need to have them out in school, especially as we provide all pupils with a device. If a pupil does need to use it to view their timetable or call home to get parents to drop something off, they should act responsibly and ask a member of staff first.

## **Festive Season**

As we head into the last three weeks of term and 2020 in school, it is also the festive season and there are a number of things for pupils to look forward to. Mr Willey will be hosting the Christmas Game Show, and although we won't be able to bring the Houses together, we will try to bring the occasion to all pupils throughout the week during tutor time. On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December, a festive dinner option will be available during break-times for pupils. Finally, on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, we will hold our annual winter/festive jumper day, where pupils will be invited to wear a jumper instead of their blazer for a donation to our chosen charity which will be the Rotherham homeless charity, Shiloh.

The last day of term is Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, it has been traditional for school to finish early after first break and for tutor groups to have their festive parties. Unfortunately, due to COVID, we will not be able to hold the festive parties. Therefore, school for Years 7, 9 and 10 will finish at 12 pm and for Years 7 and 11 at 12.15 pm. This will allow pupils to have their lunch before leaving school and still allow us to ensure there is a controlled release at the end of the day.

Finally, on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December we will say a sad goodbye to Mr Jones, Head of Hooper House and teacher of Drama. Mr Jones has been a member of staff at Oakwood for 19 years and in that time has helped and supported hundreds of pupils achieve both academic and personal success. With his blend of high standards alongside high quality care for pupils and staff alike, he epitomises the ethos and values of Oakwood High School. His commitment, hard work and amazing singing voice will be missed by everyone; I am sure you will join me in wishing him all the very best in his retirement.

I am delighted to announce that Mr Jones's position as Head of Hooper House will be taken on by Mrs Samuel who successfully secured the role following a rigorous and competitive interview process. Mrs Samuel has been a teacher at Oakwood for nine years and is currently the Leader of Learning for Making Aspirations Possible (MAP). I am sure you will all wish her well in what is a key position in school.

Yours faithfully



**Chris Eccles**  
**Head of School**

<b>Key dates next half term:</b>	
<i>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December</i>	Y7-11 Online Tutor Event, school closes from 12 pm Appointments start from 1.30 pm to 7.00 pm
<i>Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December</i>	Y11 Online Parents Evening - 3.30 pm to 7.00 pm
<i>Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December</i>	End of Term, school closes to pupils from 12 pm
<i>Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January</i>	School opens to all pupils
<i>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January</i>	Year 10 ILES begin (2 weeks)
<i>Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February</i>	Year 9 ILES begin (2 weeks)