

CEC/JWI

11 December 2020



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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 first term, it has been like no other, but looking back I am incredibly proud of how our pupils have embraced the challenge of learning during these times. This is in no small part down to the incredible support, care and commitment of the staff team at Oakwood High School. Despite the many restrictions, we have tried to maintain a level of normality. Over the final week the pupils and staff will enjoy a festive end of term that will include the traditional Christmas dinner served on Wednesday and Thursday, a virtual pantomime for the whole of Year 7 and over 80 Year 8 5R's award winners, festive competitions in tutor time and groups of our pupils going to local care homes to sing (in year group bubbles) traditional carols for the residents.

Over the last few weeks our pupils and the Perform Zone, with support from other areas, have been putting together a Christmas showcase. It is a collection of music, dance and other entertainment acts. The pupils have worked relentlessly to put this together and it will be aired to view at 7 pm via YouTube on 17th December. Details of how to access this will be sent early next week. This is just one more example of how as a school community we are committed to ensuring our pupils have the opportunity to shine; despite the barriers we and they have faced.

There has been some coverage in the press about the impact of the current pandemic on attendance. I am pleased to report that at Oakwood our attendance has been 94.6% and we are 1% above the national average, if we do not count those who have had to isolate. I am also impressed with our exclusion figures. This term we have seen a reduction in fixed term exclusions from a very strong position this time last year, as well as a significant reduction in internal sanctions. We have also been able to celebrate our academic success with you, over 300 success targets have been met and increased this term to help motivate our pupils to progress even further. This is once again testimony to how our pupils have worked with us to make this term a success.

I am pleased to report that in the last two weeks we have experienced only 4 positive pupil cases of COVID-19 (one in Year 7, Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11) and no members of staff; this represents a continued reduction over the whole term.

As we break up for the holiday we still need to support the national and in school track and trace procedures. Therefore, if your child develops symptoms and then tests positive, or tests positive on or between Saturday 19th and Wednesday 23rd December, please email attendance@oakood.ac. You will need to provide details of when your child was last in school and who they were in close contact with at break and at the start and end of the school day, as well as the date they started with symptoms and the date of their positive test result. In addition, if your child has a positive test result after this and before we return on Monday 4th January, please email and provide any names of other pupils from the school they were with. This will allow us to carry out a contact trace and ensure pupils who could potentially be carrying the virus do not return at the start of term.

A member of the Inspire Trust



Registered in England: 08775996

GCSE Exams Years 10 and 11

We have had a further update from the Department for Education with regards to GCSE examinations in the summer. Although there is still more detail to follow, we now know for certain that the exams will take place and the following has been announced:

- more generous grading than usual, in line with 2020;
- students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, to help them focus their revision (more detail to follow);
- exam aids – like formula sheets – provided in some exams to give students more confidence and reduce the amount of information they need to memorise (most likely in maths and science);
- contingency exams – held shortly after the main exam series – so students can sit a paper if they miss all their assessments in a subject because of illness or self-isolation.

There will also be adaptations to vocational and technical qualifications to make sure that there is parity with general qualifications. GCSE results day will be a little later than usual on Friday 27th August 2021.

There are some elements of this we believe will help pupils. I have been really impressed with how our pupils have been working hard despite all the uncertainty. I congratulate them for this and urge them to continue to do their best as this is one certain way of them doing well in the summer.

Festive Season

As we head into the last week 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 16th and Thursday 17th December, a festive dinner option will be available during break-times for pupils; including Halal options. Details of how to access this will be sent out next week. Finally, on Friday 18th December, we will hold a non-uniform day, with a festive theme, where pupils will be asked for a donation to our chosen charity which will be the Rotherham homeless charity, Shiloh.

The last day of term is Friday 18th December and it has been traditional for school to finish early (after first break) and for there to be time in the day 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 8 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. There was an announcement this week by the government, allowing schools to take Friday 18th as an INSET day. However, as a school we do not really see the value in this and appreciate the short notice may present problems with child care for some of our families.

Year 10 ILE's

The Year 10 ILE's start on Friday 8th January and run until Monday 25th January. Pupils will receive their preparation presentation and booklet at the start of next week. This will outline both the expectations and procedures for the ILE's, as well as support for pupils on how to prepare. These will be their first formal assessments for some time and it is important that **ALL OF YEAR 10** have the opportunity to practice under the same conditions as the final GCSE exams. ILE's contribute 50% towards a pupil's current grade on Go4Schools and therefore a strong showing is important. However, please reassure your child that the school also takes into account classwork and other assessment pieces of work. I would encourage pupils to plan for some revision over the Christmas break, but at the same time ensure they plan in time to relax, recharge and spend time with family and friends. A copy of the ILE timetable will be available on the school's website.

Uniform expectations

On the whole our pupils wear their uniform well and with pride. However, through the winter months it is important we maintain our standards. Pupils should not wear their PE hoodie, or any other hoodie with their uniform in school and all outside coats should be removed inside the building. In addition, all footwear must be completely black.

Travel to and from school

As the nights have now drawn in, can I encourage pupils who walk home to take care and where possible, walk in small groups (whilst still observing the rule of 6). In addition, can I ask parents who collect their child from school to be both considerate when parking and mindful of mandatory road markings. It is a road traffic offence to park or pick up on double yellow lines and in recent times there have been a few instances of near misses, where a child could have been injured as a result of illegal parking. I appreciate that parking outside school is of a premium, however, we all have a responsibility to ensure pupils are safe when they leave school at the end of the day.

Finally, I would just like to wish everyone an enjoyable festive break. I hope people are able to enjoy the festivities and that those families who were unable to come together for Eid and Diwali, are able to use the five day window over Christmas, to come together with family and friends. 2020 will be a year we won't forget and we certainly won't want to reminisce about. We head into the new year with the hope that the vaccine will bring back some normality and new opportunities.

I have been incredibly proud of the pupils and staff at Oakwood and how they have coped as individuals, but more importantly collectively, in the last nine months. I would also like to thank you all for your continued support and encouragement.

Yours faithfully



Chris Eccles
Head of School

| Key dates next half term: | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Monday 4th January</i> | School opens to all pupils |
| <i>Monday 11th January</i> | Year 10 ILE's begin |
| <i>Monday 1st February</i> | Year 9 ILE's begin (2 weeks) |