

Friday 27 November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you for supporting us over the last few months whilst we have been trying to put measures in place to keep our school and community safe. Students have responded incredibly well, as expected, to the introduction of masks with only 2 instances of defiance and very few students needing to purchase masks from the school. With the announcements in the last week regarding vaccines, the new tier system, and some intended plans for Christmas, we can see light at the end of the tunnel in terms of us being able to go back to some form of normality in the summer. Until that time, we will be keeping to our operating plan until such as a time as I am convinced that it is safe to make changes. The DFE are updating their guidance in relation to the new tier system and you will know doubt know that South Glos and Bristol have been placed in the Tier 3. We will of course respond to any required changes and update our risk assessments and operational plans as appropriate.

We will still be requiring students and staff to continue to wear masks inside the building except when in lessons and we will not be adjusting our expectations when it comes to maintaining the integrity of our "bubbles". We will be reviewing (in-line with Government recommendations) our extra-curricular offer to students after the Christmas break and will hopefully be able to run some revision sessions for GCSE and A level subjects in the New Year or sooner, to support preparation for exams and start to introduce other clubs for students to attend. However, we will look carefully at the guidance before any decisions are made.

I wrote to you recently to explain the process we must go through when we receive a positive case, and it is with regret that we had to extend the absence period for some Year 8 and Year 12 students to try and break the cycle of infection. It has been great to see those students from Year 8 return to school this week and we look forward to all students being back with us in the next few days. These two partial year group closures have really helped prevent further spread and I am grateful to staff for ensuring that work has been available for students to do at home.

The action we took has also really helped us to understand the importance of everyone following the rules and staying at home when anyone in their family develops symptoms or is awaiting a test. If this instruction had been followed by all, we could have potentially avoided 180 of our students needing to isolate as close contacts at various times in the last few weeks. I would urge all parents and carers to follow the rules and guidance going forward as this makes a massive difference to the school and the young people who end up needing to isolate.

If your child or anyone in your household has [symptoms](#), you must all stay at home, follow the [guidance](#), arrange for a test and let us know you are doing so. By everybody following the guidance and rules we will hope to be able to minimise any disruption to any families where students are told they will need to isolate over the Christmas period. We all have a moral and social responsibility to protect our local community so please ensure you follow this.

If we all follow the guidance it will help us avoid having to send students home to isolate over Christmas as they will then miss out on any family plans. I do not want to have to ask staff to make those calls in the last week of term, so please follow the guidance and be cautious: if someone is unwell, book a test, isolate the household and please do not send your child to school. There is a [button](#) on our front page of the website to report positive cases. This will be monitored out of hours and on the weekend.

To try and add some variety to learning in the lead up to the Christmas break, I have asked Curriculum Teams to look at their programme of study and provide some activities for students to complete and take part in during the last week of term that will be stimulating and offer something different so that we can finish the term well. They will still be based around the actual curriculum but will hopefully ensure that the students have an enjoyable end to what has been a long autumn term. We will also be running some non-uniform and Christmas jumper days in the last part of the term. Sadly, we will not be able to run our annual Christmas Dinner for local care home residents, but we will still be providing them with some remote entertainment. Students have looked forward to supporting such events and it is a shame that Covid-19 has got in the way of them.

I am proud to be able to say that our students are fine ambassadors for us all and demonstrate the same level of expectation and behaviour in the community as they do at school. We are all proud of the way they behave in our community and as they travel to and from school, but have been made aware of a couple of incidents recently that have not shed a good light on some individual students. I would like to stress that these are very isolated cases and only involve a small number of individuals, but as a part of this community, I take my responsibility as Principal very seriously when it comes to ensuring that our students represent us in the right way and will always take appropriate action to maintain the very positive reputation SBL now has.

Our students regularly demonstrate the same positive behaviours in the community that they do in their lessons and around the school site. But in order to ensure that, at these difficult times we can support our students and families in the best ways possible, I am writing to you to ask you to support us and the community in the following ways:

- If you witness or are made aware of any issues in the community involving our students, please inform the police and notify the school as soon as possible
- Please talk to your son/daughter about the importance of positive community behaviour and that they should not become a spectator of anti-social behaviour
- Encourage your son/daughter to avoid parks and locations that are frequently linked to anti-social behaviour particularly at the current time
- Check your son/daughters' mobile phone and social media accounts to ensure that they do not have inappropriate images or videos stored. Confirm that they have not posted, shared or liked media that will bring their school or themselves into disrepute. We suggest that parents repeat this process periodically.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind parents that with the exception of 'WhatsApp', all other social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age to access and use their services. The age restriction of 'WhatsApp' is 16 years.

As your local school we will support and expect our students to behave appropriately in the community. If we are made aware of any student engaging in negative or anti-social behaviour we will report the incident to the police. If, after investigation, it is deemed that their actions brings the Academy into disrepute the incident will be reported to the Principal and serious consequences may be put in place - this includes the act of sharing images and footage on social media.

To finish this email, I wanted to share with you some comments made by a local resident -and ex-SBL student- regarding her recent experience of our students. This is an excellent example of how our students are perceived.

I have talked before about how proud I am of the way students at SBL behave and support our local community: it is because of this that we are again over-subscribed in Year 7 for next year and will welcome 8 Tutor groups in September 2021. Well done to those students who are written about below: however, please don't offer sweets or anything else to anyone in the pandemic!!

'I would like to say how impressed I am by your pupils. I walk my parent's dog on the former golf course on a morning. As you can imagine I see a number of your pupils, they are always well behaved and very polite. This morning a young lad offered me one of his Haribo sweets which I declined. That gesture cheered me up especially as I was having a down day after a recent loss, that young man put a smile on my face. As a woman in her 60's I have found some groups of pupils quite rude and rather daunting, this has never happened with any of your pupils. I am writing to tell you this as I feel that people are quick to criticise but hardly ever praise. Please pass on to your pupils my thanks, as a former pupil of the school it's good to see that the same standards apply today.'

Thank you for your ongoing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Anderson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr D Anderson
Principal