

The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School

Known Nurtured Inspired

Headteacher: Ian Wilson BA PGCE MA NPQH



9th October 2020

Dear Parents, Carers, and Students,

This season of Harvest is a time when we give thanks to God for all His goodness, and in particular the food that we receive so freely, our 'daily bread'. As we all work together to care for and support our school community, I trust that you are all well and thank you for your support.

The new term is now well underway with all our year groups being educated in bubbles for their usual timetabled subjects. A large annual event at this time of the year is our Open Evening, which this year was the 6th October and in Bishops' tradition the weather was dry (the weather would usually be our primary concern!). Sadly, we were completely online but it was lovely to see so many of our students involved and to be able to give a flavour of Bishops' this term. 487 families registered to receive the link to the event and the page has been widely shared - <https://bishopschester.co.uk/virtual-open-evening/>

Our popularity leads Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority to offer substantial investment in new classrooms, toilets and computer facilities. These facilities are currently being reviewed for planning permission. If approved and funded, the new facilities would enable a seventh class to be admitted at year 7 in future years. It is refreshing to be planning forward in any sense at the moment and today Year 11 teachers will be doing just that in a virtual Parents Evening. There remains understandable anxiety concerning GCSE and A Level exams next summer but whatever the exam boards, Ofqual and the politicians decide, we are simply keeping calm and highlighting the importance of homework, assessments and classwork as possible evidence for the future.

Despite the exam and day to day frustrations we face, I continue to reflect on the excellent attitude and behaviour of our students since their return. Students and staff have navigated:

- the need to dress for the weather – coats and layers
- using limited buildings and rooms
- one-way systems and single-entry points
- staggered finishes to learning time
- Split lunches
- and of course, face coverings and remembering a spare

Our procedures were tested and proved robust earlier this week with our first two positive covid-19 case at Bishops'. The cases were isolated quickly, with a small number of students in Year 13 being traced as close/direct contacts. Our second case concerned an adult and appropriate self isolation advice was provided. I am grateful to staff, parents and students for their ongoing vigilance and patience. I would also like to thank parents and carers for the support they have shown by following government guidance in terms of self-isolation which undoubtedly has made things easier for us. Please continue to report absences to attendance@bishopschester.co.uk and refer to the [Bishop' COVID check list](#) for further guidance.

Moving forwards, it is hard to tell where we will be at the end of the half term let alone the end of the academic year. However, I am reassured by the Government's commitment to keep schools open as long as they safely can be. There will be further hurdles ahead as winter progresses. Parents may have areas of expertise or information which would be very helpful to the Bishops' community - heating solutions for example. If you have specialist knowledge or can access sponsorship to help us overcome winter hurdles, please get in touch. Covid related costs in general will be substantial over the winter and may hit £200,000 over the course of a full

school year – 30% hire/purchase of facilities, sanitisers, IT hardware – 40% cleaning requirements with 8 additional cleaners employed – 30% consumables such as hand gel and cleaning products. Education presently receives zero additional funding to cover these costs, however I feel privileged to be able to provide what is required, without compromise, due to the sound financial footing of our Academy Trust.

Our students have been exemplary, and I would like to extend my thanks to you and them for their excellent start to the year. I am committed to the measures necessary to balance the safety of those in our school community with as much normality and learning as possible.

Best wishes



Ian Wilson
Headteacher

