



## Update 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

I think I am fairly certain that this week has reaffirmed my belief that being a teacher is simply a brilliant job. I know that for some, the thought of having hundreds of teenagers in one building is similar to 'hell', but I'm happy to argue that they are just wrong! Welcoming year 10 back into the building has been nothing short of a joy. As I've said in previous updates, many people (students, parents, carers, teachers and school staff) were understandably nervous about returning to school. The risk assessment and forward planning have allowed school to operate in an extremely safe and productive manner. The students have more than risen to the challenge, following all of the safety measures impeccably and working hard throughout their day. I have a sneaky suspicion that one or two even enjoyed being back at school. I also feel particularly lucky that the teachers and school staff have been so positive about working with your children. Many of the emails and messages I received from teachers before they returned contained one word...excited. This is how they felt to come back and do what they do best, which is to teach and support our students. I'm looking forward to seeing them over the next few weeks.

On Wednesday, I had a lovely telephone conversation with a parent about the current situation and also September. She was seeking some form of clarity about how we are planning to move forward, but was also clearly aware of the national restrictions we all face. I think I am safe to say she was 'just a little bit worried'. So, just to make you aware of how we are planning for the next few weeks and into September:

1. Year 10 have returned this week for in-school education, one day per week.
2. Year 10 continue to receive on-line based learning, identical to the previous 13 weeks.
3. Years 7, 8 & 9 will continue to work from home, receiving on-line based learning.
4. Years 7, 8 & 9 will receive some additional support over the next few weeks, in the shape of video support for lessons. **Please make sure that you are asking your children to check their emails for 'invites' from teachers. This is how they will access the support.**
5. The government announced yesterday a support package for some students over the summer holidays. I will update accordingly once I have further information, but initial outlines look like it will take the form of small group work and one-to-one tuition.
6. We are **planning** towards the school being open in September as normal. This means all year groups in together at the same time, receiving a full timetable and education provision. This would be adapted according to any subsequent government advice.
7. Year 8 students who selected their options this year have been allocated their choices.
8. If the government direct schools to continue with social distancing from September, we will provide the best possible combination of in-school provision and on-line based learning.
9. We would continue to prioritise our year 11 students (current year 10), due to their proximity to formal GCSE exams, but would ensure all students could access the school site and their teachers on specific days.

Please remember that as a school, we simply respond to the advice and instruction from central government. We feel it is far better to plan as if school will return as normal in September, then scale it back / adjust if we are told. I wish I could give you all some additional clarity, but at this minute, it simply isn't available. I hope the points above provide an insight into our thinking.

Cont...

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## And finally...

In a week that saw the vast majority of teaching staff return to Woodham, I think it is worth remembering that on interview, I always ask (and so did Christine Forsyth before me) "Why do you want to work here?". The only answer we both wanted was "to work with your students". In County Durham, there are approximately 35 secondary schools, therefore teachers do have a degree of choice as to where they want to work. Most have chosen to work here. I have worked in four schools prior to Woodham and I'm happy to clarify that compared to some others, teachers and staff go the extra mile here. Furthermore (and any excuse to show the clip below) I'm also clear that being a teacher is just a brilliant job. I would encourage any students, or even parents, to consider this profession, because the rewards are consistent and fulfilling. Ask yourself the question "do you enjoy going to work?". I'm fairly certain the majority of staff at Woodham would answer "yes" to that.

"Those that can't do, teach." – For me, nothing could be further from the truth!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQskB2JJqI4>

Stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.P. Bell". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Andrew Bell  
Headteacher