

January 2022

Dear Parents, Carers and Friends of Norwood,

Thank you for taking the time to gather these concerns from parents. It has clearly raised areas that we need to continue to address and work on as a school and I do hope that the following honest feedback will be supportive and helpful. Effective communication is a priority for us and we apologise for the lack of clarity that some families have felt.

One thing that it has highlighted is the impact that Covid has had on our highly regarded transition programme. Over the last few years, we have worked hard to ensure that students and families inducted into the school are well informed of all our systems, know who to get in touch with, should they need support, are aware of our excellent pastoral system and the range of support offered and, just as importantly, the day to day routines and expectations of the school. Although we have worked incredibly hard to compensate for the lack of personal contact with families during transition, it is clear that many of our key messages have not been communicated successfully. All families are invited to a one to one meeting with Senior Staff during the Summer term of Yr 6, parents are asked to complete a detailed student information form and we work closely with Yr 6 staff from feeder primaries. This has had to happen virtually for the last two years. We have also missed the opportunity for an Induction Day - where we have historically met face to face with families, to set out rules and expectations. There were a significant number of families who chose not to attend our induction meetings or complete the requested proformas, or sadly, to even attend the scheduled "Meet the Tutor Evening" in the early part of the Autumn term. This has undoubtedly led to a number of families starting their secondary school life not being fully aware of our systems, rules and expectations, despite repeated attempts to make contact. Pastoral teams work hard to reach out to those families who have, for one reason or another, not managed to make contact with us in school. Communication is a two way process, we recognise the importance of the partnerships between families and school and the impact successful working relationships have on the achievement of the students - so we need to work together to improve aspects of our communications that are clearly not working as successfully as we would hope.

### **ILB's and Homework**

We agree and clearly recognise that we seem to have an issue with consistency and we are doing what we can in the current circumstances to address this as staff and as a school. As I write we have over 20 staff absent from school with covid, a significant number which undoubtedly has an impact on the day to day routines of a school, from messages shared at tutor time, to lessons and also work being set and marked. As with students who find themselves off school with covid, staff are experiencing a range of symptoms, some well enough to work from home, others

certainly not. We hope in time that this will improve and return to a more stable situation. I am glad that many of the parents seem to appreciate the incredibly challenging circumstances that staff have been working in over the last couple of years. I think that it is very important to put the question of consistency in the context of, at some points, significant staffing issues that we have had to manage due to covid.

In terms of the lower school, ILBs for the Autumn term have not always been consistently checked. Heads of Faculty have been reminded about monitoring, for example, making sure that they are a feature in lessons. Unfortunately a small number of students who have completed them have had no feedback at all. This is not acceptable. The Spring ILBs have been launched now, as was explained in a letter out to parents, but these have not all been handed out to students in a small number of cases. We will upload the ILB's onto the website under the Teaching and Learning tab. HOF are ensuring that all ILB's are with students.

Homework schedules for all years have always been shared on the [website here](#). The letter that was emailed to parents in December about the Spring ILB's etc can be found [here](#).

We expect Year 9-11 to have work set consistently on Google Classroom. We have asked HOF's to monitor and intervene where homework is not checked or returned to students.

These are the expectations that have been used to remind staff of our expectations for ILB's.

- Students are expected to spend a minimum of 30 minutes per week of independent study in each subject (45 minutes for core subjects).
- ILBs will provide the tools students need to effectively revise content, deepen skills through meaningful practice, reflect upon their performance and take ownership of their learning.
- ILBs must be integrated into lessons; students will bring them to class and take them home with them. Teachers must model the use of ILBs in the lesson and give clear instructions as to what to complete.
- Teachers must monitor their completion (at least bi-weekly) and ensure there are systems for ensuring completion.
- Although teachers are not expected to provide personalised written feedback on ILBs, they are expected to regularly test students on the content and skills outlined in the ILBs.

We have asked that, moving forward, our Independent Learning Policy is embedded in what we do day in, day out as teachers. This can be found [here on the website](#) and although it is due to be reviewed, it outlines our expectations and approach to

independent learning across the school, with suggested timings, our approach to marking and feedback as well as how the work is tied into assessments and classwork. Although we no longer use 'Show my homework', the expectation is that work is shared on Google classroom.

[A guide for students on how to access google classroom is here](#), but your concerns have highlighted the need for a parent guide too, I have added a very comprehensive video guide [for parents here too](#). Deadlines and set tasks will appear on the 'to do' list for parents to check.

We expect students who have completed and handed in Autumn ILB'S to receive feedback. This does not have to be written feedback in booklets, but can be through whole class feedback or other means.

Moving forwards, we will be working with staff to encourage students to take ILBs home, complete directed tasks and bring them to each lesson, where work/ understanding is checked. Google Classroom will still be used to remind students of what they should be completing. The booklets are the backbone of home learning and must be a staple feature of lessons.

We have reminded staff that work must be set weekly on Google Classroom for years 9, 10 and 11, collected, checked and feedback given (written or otherwise).

There are sanctions for incomplete HW. Students are kept behind for faculty detentions, or sometimes miss social time, in which case, parents should be informed via a text from the office. If engagement does not improve the teachers are able to place a child on a faculty report to monitor effort and achievement. If this is the case, teachers would be expected to inform parents of the reason for the report and also the outcomes after a set period of time. Parents can see on google classroom when and where tasks are set as well as deadlines.

Effective feedback takes many forms. Staff will frequently use positive comments in class about HW completion. The quality and amount of valuable verbal feedback given to students cannot be necessarily replicated via google classroom. Duplicating comments and notes made in class and in books online would not necessarily be the best use of teachers' time. Most subjects encourage students to take their exercise books home, book looks and monitoring evidence shows that many subjects have past exam papers kept for reference in the back of their books as well as assessment trackers.

## **Reading**

We agree, of course, that reading is a very important part of all our subjects. Our monitoring shows that reading is frequently used effectively by staff in HW tasks/ILB's and of course as part of excellent lessons.

Suggested reading lists are shared in our Transition Booklet to all Yr 6 and are also posted here on the [website](#).

Creative Writing Club, run by Mr Galea and also Mr Murphy, runs for a wide range of students from across the year groups. It has produced some wonderful newspapers - [here](#) Creative Writing is certainly a very important aspect of the English curriculum. Staff frequently discuss their own reading with students. Students from across all years are keen to take on Librarian responsibilities. World Book Day and World Poetry Day are regular fixtures in our school calendar, celebrated with activities, competitions, visitors and assemblies. Displays in classrooms and on corridors highlight and celebrate a diverse variety of authors.

Visiting authors have always been a regular part of our curriculum, for example Nicola Garrard talking to Yr 9 before Christmas about her new book 29 Locks. During Allyship week we hosted poets and authors, offered parents books to read alongside their children, had lessons and competitions structured around Marcus Rashford's book and supported groups of students interviewing Sophie Williams and Candice Brathwaite for the podcasts saved [here](#).

BookFlix the Audio Series, established in lockdown, consisted of weekly episodes where teachers read a selection of short stories from a range of different cultures and perspectives that were shared across all year groups. Students sent thoughts and feelings about the stories to Mr Galea directly and views were shared on the next episode. If you missed the links that were sent out frequently in lockdown - please listen to the [podcasts here](#).

The Key Stage 3 Library is where students can access a variety of texts, including magazines, reference books and comics, during lunchtime and after school. Sixth Form Reading buddies support Key Stage 3 students.

### **Positive Feedback**

Do you ask your children about the positive postcards many of them will have received from teachers? Positive postcards are given to students in form time on a Friday, often as a celebration for those who have made a great effort in class or for HW, have shown great compassion or respect for others or for generally getting it right - being smart, arriving on time to school and class and doing their best.

We also wrote home to let you know about the Hot Chocolate with the Heads on Friday initiative, where students nominated from each year group spend breaktime with Mr Cole and Ms Clemenger, enjoying a hot chocolate with marshmallows from a special mug that they will bring home with them. Latest news and newsletters are posted on the website. We recently sent home details of our newly updated social media, links on every page of the website, these are whole school, the Visual Arts as well as the Basketball Academy social media. Please do follow the links so that you can be kept up to date with so many of the activities that happen in and out of school.

### **Notification of Assessments and Reporting**

These can be found [here on the website](#) along with [information about when data and reports are sent home](#). Formative assessments and tests will be posted on google classrooms by staff. Teachers will frequently remind students in class too of up and coming tests. Staff will post on google classroom what students are expected to revise and how long the test will be. Parents need to be proactive checking the google classroom from time to time. Data drops will give you an indication of where your child is compared to their target grade for that academic year. This will be indicated as either working beyond, working at or working towards their target. They will also be awarded an effort grade - 1 being high, 4 the lowest. Key stage 4 and 5 data drops will give an indication of current working grade compared to target grade for the end of Yr 10/12 then 11 and 13.

### **Google Classroom Names**

I have asked HOF to ask staff to rename their google classrooms, the abbreviations are generated by the link to the timetable system in sims. It is a quick and relatively easy little job to do. However the classroom is also identified as the same code on your child's timetable.

### **Curriculum Plans and Topics**

Staff have been working hard on refining their curriculum plans and pathways. These will be posted on the website in due course. Of course, we agree that, as we have done in the past, it would be helpful to have the plans in a user-friendly format for parents to see.

### **Clubs and Extracurricular**

Unlike Primary school where the majority of after school provision is paid for, we pride ourselves on the wide variety of clubs and activities that run here free of charge. New activities arise from time to time and I will add [to the website here](#) and ask staff running the club to email information home to families. When I looked at the ones that are currently advertised, we have shared 74 clubs which I think is very impressive, this doesn't include targeted intervention, mentoring programmes, Bursary Clubs and GCSE subject specific after school clubs. Regular clubs are advertised on the website - along with timings, target audience and venues.

### **Communications with Staff/Parents**

It is our expectation that staff acknowledge communication from parents within 24 hours. It is obviously not always possible to have a detailed response immediately but parents are welcome to let senior staff, HOY and HOF's know if they are experiencing issues with getting a reply. Contact details for relevant staff can be [found here on the website](#). It might be the case that a small minority of parents are not satisfied with the response they might have had from staff but I know, in general, our staff are incredibly diligent when it comes to getting in touch to resolve any issues or to offer support to students and families. As with most things, when we don't get it right, it might appear that this is the norm, I would argue to the contrary.

## **Yr 9 Pathways Choices Information**

The document that a Yr 9 tutor mistakenly posted on a google classroom last week was not the one that I myself have circulated to families. In their haste to help, they posted an edition that has since been amended. Please disregard this document that has been circulated on WA and refer to the ones that I emailed last week and have posted [on the website here](#).

## **Revision Guides**

Historically these have been sold at live Parent Events. I will arrange for the Core Subjects to add books to the ParenPay system.

## **Disruption to Learning**

Please rest assured that it is also our concern to ensure that we have a clear sense of how well the students are achieving, what they know and what learning they have missed, especially in light of the ongoing disruption caused by Covid 19 and the new variant. Since our return staff have used a variety of strategies to make individual assessments of students' knowledge and understanding. Teaching and learning strategies have been adapted in class so that gaps in knowledge can be identified and then teaching adjusted accordingly. Changes to sets have been made so that students are placed in the best groups according to their most recent attainment and assessments. We are keen to ensure that there is clear communication with parents re set changes. Staff worked tirelessly during lockdown to support the most vulnerable, and it is those young people who have sadly had to bear the brunt of the negative impact of the pandemic. It is only right that we support those most in need as a priority. The return to structured routine and the stability of a normal school day cannot be underestimated and we have put a great deal of time and energy into supporting students' mental health and wellbeing. We have employed additional expertise on the team to further support the wellbeing of students and staff. We also work closely with a large number of outside agencies to address individual needs.

Staff are working incredibly hard to make accurate frequent formative assessments of a child's/class's progress. These are discussed within the faculty and at line management level. We know that catching up will be a long game, there will be no quick fixes. We have received funding to support small groups and one to one tutoring that we are establishing in the Sixth Form initially with the view to rolling it out to other years in the near future.

## **Trips and Visits**

It is fantastic that so many of our staff are keen to organise so many different trips and visits, both here and abroad. Sadly, we are always limited in numbers and

places have to be often offered on a first come first served basis. We know that many of the residential trips will always prove popular and so students are given notice in tutor time and in that subjects' lessons about forthcoming bookings but we now know that perhaps it would be helpful to do the same for parents - perhaps email a week or so in advance of releasing bookings in a similar way to the way we promote virtual parents evenings. It is very expensive to run a school trip, not just in the time it takes staff to organise but we also need to consider the cost of covering any staff absence, supply staffing rates are currently over £200 per day. We also need to plan for staff absence from a pastoral or managerial point of view, is it a HOY or HOF accompanying the trip? It is not just as easy as adding numbers to accommodate additional students. We would hope that places are allocated fairly and we are very mindful of equality of opportunity and so we do bear this in mind. We are also well aware that some students and families, though no fault of their own, are not in a financial position to be able to afford trips and visits, if this is the case, pastoral staff will identify particular individuals according to need and support them accordingly. It will be fabulous in the future to be able to offer travel bursaries via some of the funds raised by the Friends of Norwood to support less affluent individuals. We will endeavor to advertise the calendar of trips and visits at the start of the academic year. However, we know that you will appreciate that the opportunity for trips and visits changes throughout the school year. I have asked the office to regularly [update the calendar](#) on the website to reflect trips and visits.

### **Lost property**

Items are left in the main office. Please ensure that all your child's kit, bag and uniform is clearly named so that it can be returned. Students can go to the office before and after school at break and lunchtime to claim lost property.

### **MFL**

We are unable to offer a choice of either French or Spanish at the start of Year 7.

### **Lockers**

Unfortunately there is nowhere to locate lockers for the whole school, we have looked into it on numerous occasions, even considering the cost of and possible location of outdoor lockers. We are not able to have them in corridors due to health and safety restrictions and it is not practical to have them in tutor bases that are used throughout the day by other classes and teachers. The Sixth Form have access to lockers in Yr 12 and 13.

### **Canteen**

We are delighted with the popularity of the new catering provider Olive Dining. The increased uptake of FSM's has been overwhelming, and we are generally delighted with the vastly improved quality of the food offered. Please see all the menus and newsletters that we email home [here](#)

We do not sell sweet, fizzy drinks to Key Stage 3 or 4. Any carbonated drinks offered are all school regulation compliant. We do not sell flavored waters and no longer stock plastic bottles of water. Snacks including cans of coke, chocolate and crisps are only sold in Esther's Cafe for the Sixth Form and staff. We agree that students need to be aware of their intake of HFSS products and these are certainly limited and provision changes daily. This is a very important aspect of the Food curriculum taught within the Technology Carousel in Key Stage 3 and as part of the newly established Hospitality and Catering Course in Key Stages 4 and 5. We attempt to prevent students coming into school too with sugary snacks, sweets and large packets of crisps, but this, as I am sure you are aware, is a challenge to police. [See P16 of Student Handbook](#)

As a parent you are able to keep an eye on what your child is buying and how much money you choose to top up. A child on FSM's will not be able to use their allowance to purchase anything other than the fresh meal deal. We are looking into ways that parents could block the purchase of particular foods on their account, but this can't be done through Parent Pay - we are speaking to the company who runs the tills who might be able to help. We will, of course, let you know if we are able to sort this out from our end. The cookies and donuts on sale during breaktime are limited to one per student. They are popular, yes, but not all students buy them.

The lunch break is indeed very short and we are looking into ways of possibly lengthening it in next years' timetable. However, lunch timings are staggered each day, classes take turns on a rotation, going down to lunch early. Staff are on duty at all three possible venues, the large and small canteen and Esther's cafe in the atrium. The queues are very busy initially but go down incredibly quickly and we do not have an issue with children not being able to have lunch in the allotted time. I realise that some children might choose to buy refreshments at break and eat them during lunch. Many like to have something to take away to eat, they are able to choose from fresh baguettes and sandwiches as well as salads. The smaller canteen also offers a take away service for hot food and we have purchased a dining cart that will be placed outside as an additional servery in the near future. This will again help to ease congestion, add choice and reduce queuing times further. Parents can choose what to top up on their accounts and can see what it is spent on.

Additional toilets have been added to the lower corridor in the Visual Art Department this year. Staff are on duty outside all the students' toilets at lunch and break time to move students on to stop them from loitering and putting the younger ones off from using the facilities. It is a short and busy lunchtime but the vast majority of students find the time to have a break, visit the toilets and have their lunch. Those who require a toilet pass on medical grounds are issued them via a HOY and teaching staff made aware.

## **Website Translation**



We have recently sent an email to families to highlight what we think will be a very useful tool. Using the link below parents can now translate any page of the school website into any language.

<http://itools.com/tool/google-translate-web-page-translator>

All you need to do is add the school website address into the top bar - <https://www.thenorwoodschool.org> and pick the language that you would like the website to be translated into. We really hope that this will give even more parents access to the important updates, information and support that we regularly publish. Once you have translated the website you can save the new link for future reference

For instance:

Polish:

<https://www-thenorwoodschool-org.translate.google/? x tr sl=auto& x tr tl=pl& x tr hl=en>

Lithuanian:

<https://www-thenorwoodschool-org.translate.google/? x tr sl=auto& x tr tl=lt& x tr hl=en>

### **School Leadership**

We wrote earlier in the year about the fact that Mrs Webster was to be retiring and that Mr Cole and Ms Clemenger were appointed as Interim Headteachers. They met with every child in the school in year assemblies to explain the situation and to reassure students. There has been no indication yet from Lambeth about the process that will lead to a permanent Head Teachers's post, but we will, of course, let you know what we can, when appropriate. Both Mr Cole and Ms Clemenger will always be at any school event, for example, the great Comedy Show hosted by FON last week - so please feel free to introduce yourselves, I know they would be happy to meet you as parents.

I appreciate that this has been a very long response to your concerns but I do hope that it has been able to offer some clarity to the points that you made. One thing that I think would be helpful would be a **Welcome to Norwood - Parents Guide** that, with the help of those of you involved in the Friends of Norwood, we could plan to publish for our next cohort of Yr 6. Their induction will start as soon as we have National Offer Day in March, but hopefully we will be able to host the many live events over the forthcoming months with new families that will establish a greater sense of clarity and community that some of you might have felt over the last couple of years. It would be great to have FON volunteers at our Induction Events, the first being their Friendship Tea Party that we will hope to host later this term.

We know that we will only help our children achieve their incredible potential if we work together in a supportive partnership, so your feedback has been valued. We know that we don't always get everything right but are also very proud of our fantastic school, the fact that the children do so well and are happy that they want to

be here. The amazing, nurturing, caring community that we have built is what makes our school a special place to work and learn.

I would like to be able to ask parents to complete a questionnaire over the next few weeks that will garner information about many of the aspects of your concerns that I hope I have addressed and to get feedback from larger numbers of families so that we can continue to improve.

With kind regards, take care and stay safe,

Ms Nicholas  
Senior Deputy Headteacher