



19th October 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It has been so wonderful to welcome back all of our students this term and we have been really impressed with the way in which they have adapted to the new ways that we have had to operate. As the first half of the autumn term is drawing to a close, I would like to share with you some of the achievements that we have had as well as some of the plans that we have for when we return after the half term break.

As you might imagine, it has been a busy term for us as we brought back just under 1,000 students into full-time education, but as always, it has been tremendously rewarding. We have welcomed a fantastic new cohort of Year 7 students to the school, who have settled incredibly well and we can also celebrate the fact that 100% of our outgoing Year 11 students have progressed into further education, training or employment. We wish them well in their next steps and look forward to hearing how they are progressing. We have also seen over 30 students complete their Silver DofE practice and qualifying expeditions and over 80 students complete their Bronze practice expeditions which is amazing and shows real determination. We are so proud of them all.

Our new working practices which have been implemented to keep our staff and students safe have proved to be incredibly successful and I have outlined some of those below:

- An adjustment to the sequence of lessons in the school day, with students going straight into period one rather than tutor time. This has worked well and students have said that they prefer to access their learning immediately and then catch up with their tutor later in the day.
- Students entering through their own entrance each morning. This has given us a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet students in a more personalised way and this will possibly be a change that we will maintain longer term.
- Year group zones during social times. This change has been really successful and has given students the opportunity to mix with and get to know better, members of their own year group which many have told us they really valued.
- A one way system with new floor markings to ensure all students move around the site facing in the same direction. This has been a real positive with lesson changeovers easier to facilitate as everyone is moving in the same direction. It has also meant that corridors are far less congested.
- A robust cleaning programme, alongside regular hand sanitisation and the requirement for all students to wear face coverings whilst moving about the site has meant that we have been able to keep the transmission of the virus to a minimum.

I am also pleased to announce that we have introduced a variety of new teaching and learning strategies, which I feel confident will help us to reduce the gaps in students' knowledge and skills as a result of lockdown and ensure we are both supporting and challenging students in their learning.

Tutor Reading Programme:

The 'Isca Anthology', our new tutor reading programme, is an excellent addition to tutor time. Over the course of the year, tutors will read a number of books of different genres and literary traditions with their tutees to promote reading confidence, fluency and comprehension. Our tutors are really enjoying this special time with their tutees and it has been a joy to observe how quickly a book can enthrall each and every student in a matter of seconds.

Homework:

You will be aware that we have introduced a new homework system this half term and we have been delighted with the response from our students. This system is quite a significant change from what was in place previously and because of this, you will know that we are in the process of consulting parents, teachers and students on what is working and any further changes that may be required. I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed thus far to the survey, your feedback is incredibly important to us. The consultation will close on Friday 23rd October and the link to this and all of the information relating to the system is available on our website at: <https://iscaexeter.co.uk/students/homework/>

Parallel Curriculum:

In the event that your child has to self-isolate, we have created virtual classrooms on Google for your child to access from home, so that they are still able to study and follow the curricula taught by their class teachers. If this happens, you will receive an individual letter which they will bring home with them. Equally, if you click on the link on our website, it will provide you with all the information to enable you to support them: <https://iscaexeter.co.uk/school-life/parallel-curriculum/> We have also worked with all students to make sure they can access each Google Classroom by showing them how to do this. They also have a grid (stuck into their Knowledge Organiser) with each individual code they will require to access the classrooms. If they have lost this, please email your child's Head of Year in the first instance.

Looking ahead to the second half of this term:

Timetable

We will be moving to a revised timetable where we will be using our specialist classrooms for all of the student's lessons and not just option subjects. This will enable our students to access the science laboratories and specialist resources to enhance their learning experiences even more. We feel that we can now move to this following the successful implementation of a number of safety measures such as the one way system, wearing of face coverings during movement time and extensive cleaning regimes throughout the school day. All of our other operating models will remain in place such as separate student entrances as well as social time zones.

Face coverings

Please can you continue to remind your child that they need to bring a face covering with them to school each day and also the importance of wearing it. If your child travels on public transport to and from school they are also required to wear their face covering at all times when using this transport.

PE Kit and Changing

As the weather will undoubtedly take a turn for the worse as we move into the winter months, we are adapting our PE procedures to ensure our students can continue to take part in physical activity, regardless of the weather conditions. To enable this to happen we will re-introduce students to changing areas so that they will no longer be required to wear their PE kit all day.

As they do now, students should continue to come to school in full PE kit on days that they have a timetabled PE lesson. However, they will need to bring with them, their full school uniform so that they can get changed into their uniform at the end of their PE lesson. The procedure for each lesson will be that students arrive at their PE lesson, drop off their bags in a safe and dry destination, take part in their lesson and then get changed at the end of a PE lesson. We will ensure that the highest level of safety for our students continues through the following measures, which are in accordance with government guidelines for PE:

1. Students will be kept in consistent groups in their year group bubbles for PE lessons
2. All activities in Physical Education (PE) lessons will be non-contact and planned to ensure that distance is maximised between children
3. Scrupulous attention will be paid to cleaning and hygiene
4. Students will wash and/or sanitise their hands before and after their lessons
5. Movement around the PE areas will be considered so as to limit risks. For example, entry and exit points
6. Lessons will be outside where possible and activities altered to ensure suitable social distancing

7. When changing areas are used, social distancing will be maintained and the areas cleaned after every lesson. Particular attention will be given to high touch areas
8. The changing space has more than doubled with each group having their own, large, allocated area
9. Clear signage reminding pupils about social distancing and washing their hands will be displayed in all teaching areas, including outdoor open spaces
10. The sharing of equipment during PE lessons will be limited and if equipment is shared, pupils will wash their hands thoroughly before and after use. Whistles, drink bottles, bibs and bands will not be shared.

Cycle Safety

It is fantastic to see that so many of our students are cycling to and from school this term. However, can I please ask for your support in reminding your child of the importance of safety when cycling by wearing a cycle helmet.

Mock Examinations

Our Year 11 students will be undertaking the first of two mock examination periods which will take place from Monday 23rd November - Friday the 4th December. On Monday 16th November, students will be given their individual examination schedules and a booklet detailing what is expected during formal examinations. This information will also be upload to our website <https://iscaexeter.co.uk/school-life/exams/> alongside additional information, advice and guidance including student well-being and support.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind you that the last day of this half-term is Friday 23rd October and we will return back to school on Monday the 9th November. We hope you manage to have a safe and restful break.

Thank you for your overwhelming support and patience during this challenging time, it really is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Miss Aimee Mitchell, Headteacher