

15th May 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians

I am writing to outline my initial proposals for Year 10 after half term and ask that **you complete the short questionnaire via the link at the end of this letter.**

I want to start by thanking all of you and especially the boys for the way they have engaged with Microsoft Teams. The atmosphere in lessons has been extremely positive and the boys have been superb in working with and indeed supporting the teachers as we all become familiar with the new technology. Another example of Brymore at its best.

I want to start by reiterating that in my view the key priorities have not changed. First and foremost, I have a duty of care to ensure that everyone in the Brymore community stays safe. This is the key driver when putting together the programme after half term. Secondly, we must look after each other's mental health and I see my role as essentially being as supportive as I can to you as parents. That is why I have tried to make it clear from the outset that there is no judgement from us as a school if all of the work is not completed. Lastly, we have to continue to prepare the boys for the examinations they will face next year. When the boys hopefully return to school more normally in September, I am confident that my staff will do all that they can to ensure the boys will achieve the success they deserve.

It is clear that some boys will not be able to attend school after half term and that some of you may choose to not send your son in due to ongoing concerns about Covid-19. I want to make it clear that this is a **choice** that I fully support you with. Other than welfare checks there will be no chasing from us, no fines for non-attendance and boys will not get behind with their work. I remind you of my priorities above and this has been instrumental in putting the programme together. Covid-19 is still very much with us and we all have very different personal circumstances. You must make the decision that is right for your family.

We are unable to offer anything like a normal timetable for various reasons, most notably due to the need to ensure social distancing is adhered to and the significant numbers of staff that will not be available. More staff are able to work from home and the lessons that have been delivered via Microsoft Teams have proved to be hugely successful with excellent rates of attendance. Nationally attendance at online lessons has been as low as 20% whereas at Brymore it is often well over 90%. I therefore intend to continue with this timetable, so that boys can continue to be taught safely at home whilst not falling behind other students across the country. It is a system that is working and therefore I do not intend to change it. Boys will then be given an opportunity to attend on one afternoon a week where they will be offered various outdoor activities including sport (not team games), garden activities, a chance to get academic/pastoral support with the work that is being set or any concerns that they have. This approach will allow us to limit the number of boys in at any one time to around 10-12. The same boys will be in on the same day each week with the same team of staff to minimise the number of people that each person comes into contact with. I propose that these sessions will run from 2.00pm until 3.45pm. The key purpose of these afternoon sessions is to support the mental health of the boys, to allow them to re-connect with Brymore before the summer holidays but in a way that is safe.

At this time the government guidance to schools is not clear and Headteachers are seeking more clarification on a daily basis. I have a concern that we are expected to open without PPE for example, and that is something we are trying to source ourselves. Another of our challenges is that we will need to increase cleaning, but with fewer cleaners available. These are all factors that contribute to the number of boys we can have on site at any one time.

Unfortunately, I am unable to offer boarding at this time, however those that live within travelling distance are entitled to attend. The academic progress of boarders will not be disadvantaged as all of the lessons will continue to be delivered using Microsoft Teams.

The purpose of this letter is to give you a better understanding of what we will be offering to allow you to make an informed decision about whether you wish your son to attend or not. Once we know numbers, we will then send out a more detailed programme and when it is likely to start. At this point, whilst we are planning for the 1st of June, I cannot guarantee that is when we will re-open as it will depend on student numbers, the number of staff I have available and whether I am satisfied we are able to accept boys back safely. I want to emphasise again that this is your choice as a parent and that no boy will lose out academically by not attending.

IMPORTANT: please click this link to take you to the questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/4tCxr7NZP78PD5no6>

Thank you once again for your continued support and please continue to stay safe.

Yours faithfully
MARK THOMAS
Headteacher