

SCA/HAD/

7th May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to start by saying how proud I am of how hard the students are working in school and the resilience they are showing, despite everything that has affected their education throughout the last 14 months. I have spent time visiting lessons and talking to students and they have shown themselves to be a real credit to their community. I would like to thank parents and carers for the crucial role you have played in guiding your children through such difficult times.

I want to make a special mention for the staff as well at this point. The recent developments from the DfE and Ofqual have meant that not only are teachers preparing students for assessments earlier than expected, but they are also carrying out the invigilation, marking, standardising and moderating of the assessments. Subject leaders and support staff are carrying out extensive administrative tasks for each student. The staff have been wonderful and are carrying this out with huge amounts of diligence and care as we all want our students to reap the rewards of their hard work. Parents of students in Year 11 and 13 will soon receive a separate letter, giving more detail on the process, the timelines involved and the support we have put in place.

Learning and Curriculum

In terms of learning, subject knowledge and understanding is and always will be a crucial factor in our students' achievement (you might be interested to visit the Curriculum section of our website for more detail of our underpinning philosophy <https://www.jesmondparkacademy.org.uk/curriculum/curriculum-overview>). With the ever-increasing demands in education, the need for our students to be able to apply this knowledge and make connections across multiple disciplines is fundamental not only for their achievement but also for their understanding of the wider world. Much of this development comes through the academic rigour of their lessons, combined with their homework, but I am particularly impressed by the strong Cultural Capital Programme at the school. Recently, KS3 students have covered a broad range of topics during registration including: The Temple at Abu-Simbel; Elizabeth I's speech to the troops at Tilbury and 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. We are currently having a

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Spanish-themed half term with the cultural significance of Paella and Flamenco two recent areas of study.

On other news related to learning, I will write to you shortly regarding our plans for how the school will feed back on how your child has performed this year. Although the usual Parents' Evenings have not been able to take place this year, it is one of my priorities to ensure that parents have the opportunity to hear how students have performed. Finalised plans should be published before the half-term break.

Extra-curricular

There is more to school than just learning however and I am keen to reintroduce more and more activities as the weeks go by. I am pleased to announce that the PE department are now able to follow their normal summer curriculum, with athletics, tennis and cricket lessons taking place across the school. Our extra-curricular 'Period 7' provision has also started to get back to normal. We have a basketball club for all year groups on a Tuesday and Thursday after school. We have a tennis club for years 7 to 10 on a Tuesday after school. Our first tennis fixtures are due to take place on Wednesday 19th May against Royal Grammar School and Newcastle High School for Girls. After half term we will be running summer sports clubs for years 7-9. Further details of these will be published nearer the time.

Moreover, we are now at a point where we will be able to look at reintroducing school trips and visits, providing they are not residential. All such ventures will be fully risk assessed on an individual basis. Up until now, all these experiences have been virtual. For example, for the last 12 weeks a group of Y12 Physics students have been attending virtual ORBYT conferences led by Northumbria University, looking at solar wind properties. Mrs Bradley has been informed the presentation by our students will help to go towards research on a new predictive model of the Earth's Radiation Belts – inspirational! You will be able to read more about this in the coming edition of Parklife that will be published prior to the end of summer term.

The Praise Code

I have been very impressed with the compliance of the majority of students with the school PRAISE Code; behaviour around school and attitude to learning is good and I have seen a very positive working atmosphere in the classes that I have visited. The PRAISE Code is one key area of school that I plan to continue to enforce as I firmly believe that all children deserve the opportunity to learn to the best of their ability, uninterrupted by poor behaviour during lessons or around school. The PRAISE Code ensures this absolutely. Similarly, I have been impressed by the presentation of student planners and the smartness of students in their school uniforms and look forward to this continuing.

Covid

We realise that infection rates around the country have been falling and there does finally seem to be light at the end of the tunnel. However, we all need to continue to be careful and to follow the Government advice. There have been a small number of

cases at school this term, so it is important that we continue to adhere to the strict guidelines that have served us so well.

It is still my intention however to begin to bring the school out of the restrictions this coming term so that we can look to return to what students would feel to be a 'normal' school experience by the start of July. The Senior Team are working together on this currently and identifying areas to support a return to increasingly 'normal' provision. Many controls are likely to remain, such as the use of hand sanitiser and segregated social times, but we hope to begin to allow students to enter more specialised curriculum rooms soon.

I would like to wish you all a fantastic weekend,

Warm regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Campbell', written in a cursive style.

STEVE CAMPBELL
PRINCIPAL