



Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Ref: MBR/AMo

Dear parents and guardians,

I thought we would contact all parents this month and talk you through some of the many positive things that are happening at National, and also highlight a few things to all parents for clarity towards the end of this letter. Please take the time to read and discuss the points with your children.

### Positives

- In the last week we have had no cases of Covid-19 at all at either National Church of England Academy or Hucknall Sixth Form Centre. Since September our numbers have actually been very low and when we do have to send any students home to isolate, we have received positive feedback from parents and students regarding how smooth and efficient our systems are and that work is readily available for learning to continue remotely. Having spoken with Public Health England, we were told that they felt our systems were robust. National is not currently a concern.
- Our attendance so far this year is around 95%. Nationally, the average secondary attendance is 78% and as we know, sadly many schools in different parts of the country have been hit with staffing issues and higher numbers of students isolating. We still have a long and tough year ahead and things can change quickly, but so far things have gone well overall. Please support us in instilling kindness and respect to all, including on social media.
- Our behaviour in lessons is positive and remains focused on learning. Our exclusion figures are around a quarter of what they are nationally which is very positive. All schools have occasional issues to respond to but the site remains calm and any issues are dealt with following our published policies and with our vision and ARCH values in mind.
- This year we are going to continue with our Christmas concert and our end of term Christmas act of worship, however, both of these events will be recorded rather than live and our students and staff have spent time preparing performances for our community to enjoy. It is important that we still celebrate and worship with our community and these are events which unite us all and bring us closer. We will publish details of these events in December and it will be something to look forward to before Christmas.
- Thank you to all of the parents who are dropping and picking up children away from the school main entrance. This really does make a difference to safety, and while there are still a few who stop directly outside, we appreciate the efforts that are being made.

1

Vision: 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)



- We will be providing Free School Meals vouchers over the Christmas period and will be in contact with those families shortly with the arrangements for that.
- We have supplied over 20 new laptops and routers to our most disadvantaged and vulnerable students who do not have any access to online learning at home.
- This week we had our first remote AMP parents' evening which was a huge success. After appointments were made, teachers across 2 nights were able to contact home via the students 'Teams' account and were able to have a conversation over a video call regarding the progress of Year 9 students. The IT system and protocols worked well and we can now look to repeat this process for other year groups during the year. It was fantastic to see our staff and parent's communicating and working so closely again. Thank you to all parents for making appointments and keeping to the schedule and times allocated.
- The Year 11 mock exams have come to an end and it is fair to say that throughout the exams, students conducted themselves very well and took the whole practice very seriously. When mock exam feedback is given, it is important that students and parents see this as valuable information to use to help students improve. It forms part of a journey and students need to understand they have time to respond. I went into a full exam and congratulated students for their approach to exams and their conduct throughout. Our invigilation team also commented on how polite and well organised students were.
- After the 2<sup>nd</sup> December the academy will be reviewing its extra-curricular provision and it may begin to reintroduce some activities after school. These will still have risk assessments in place and still be in year group bubbles. It may be that we start small and expand if things go well. We will be in contact after the 2<sup>nd</sup> December regarding our decision but understand that this is a valuable part of education we are all missing due to the current restrictions.
- The academy took the decision to end the day on the final day before Christmas at the normal times of 3.10pm and 3.15pm. We felt that with so much time lost due to the academy closure last year our main priority is ensuring that all of our students can catch up and have access to staff for as long as possible. Therefore, lessons will continue as normal right up to the end of the school day.
- The whole academy has practised a 'lockdown' drill and it was highly successful. The new reception area, added security, new locks on doors and new speaker system across school worked very well and again, student's behaviour and attitudes were excellent.
- Over the last few weeks the staff at National have continued to bring food donations in for the local food bank. In our staffroom we have managed to collect many large boxes of food including some Christmas related items to support our community. We do understand that things are very tough for many. We have a long-standing relationship with the Hucknall Under One Roof Engage food bank and we will continue this as the year progresses.
- Thank you to all of the parents who have sent messages of support to staff at our academy. Every positive message we have received has meant so much and we have shared many of the comments with all of our staff.

### Points to clarify/issues

#### **Detentions**

On the rare occasion a student is given a detention either in school time or after school they **must** attend. If they do not, the sanction is escalated as per our behaviour policy. It is disappointing that a small number of parents are not working with us and supporting our high expectations. When staff call home to inform parents of any detention, we are increasingly being met with resistance and last week a number of parents refused to allow their child to attend. We **do not** need permission to keep a child in a detention **as per government guidance**. If we give a detention after school, the school day is extended and this is then school time.



### 3

We do have some parents who claim that we cannot keep their child, however, **this is totally inaccurate**, we can and are without any doubt allowed and this does not break any law. We will always try to contact parents out of courtesy to inform them but this is not a negotiation, parents will be informed their child is staying. Our policy forms part of the agreement parents made by sending their child to National. A missed 45-minute detention can quickly turn into an hour and 15 minutes after school and if that is missed it can turn into a day in isolation. If that is missed it can become a fixed term exclusion.

The system is clear and is there to support continuation of good behaviour and discipline. The application of our policy is in the best interests of all students and is part of their education – actions have consequences, positive and negative. Please speak to your child regarding our high standards and expectations and explain that it would be better **to avoid any detention in the first place** before joining an escalating system which may involve parents being put out by having to arrange a later collection of their child or an alternative way home.

#### Phone calls

Sadly, we are receiving an increased number of calls to our staff, especially our wonderful reception team, which are rude and on occasions quite aggressive. Our reception team are fantastic and are often the first staff to speak to parents and help them. We do not accept abuse or aggression towards any of our staff and will seek further action including support from the Police or banning them from future attendance on site under the Nuisance and Disturbance on Education Premises – Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. We will also be investing in a new telephone system and are exploring the recording of calls as an extra layer of protection for our staff.

The whole country is going through a frustrating time at the moment and perhaps that may be linked to the sudden increase in these types of calls, but please remember that our staff are normal people doing their very best to help callers and callers are more likely to get the help they require if they maintain a calm and polite manner.

#### Jogging bottoms

In July we announced that on the days that students have PE, students could wear plain, navy, unbranded jogging bottoms all day. Some students are now coming in fully branded, quite expensive bottoms. We have encouraged and reminded in lessons but **from Monday the PE faculty will be issuing detentions after school for having incorrect PE kit**. As advised several months ago, students should be wearing plain navy jogging bottoms only.

Vision: 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)



**Summary**

As Christmas approaches and 2021 is on the horizon, it is important to look forward and consider the possibilities for 2021. We have a detailed catch up plan in affect to close any gaps which may have emerged as a result of this years school closures, and, as things stand, we are able to provide a good education and experience for all of our students in all year groups. Students should look forward to further opportunities to improve and develop themselves and feel supported by our committed staff. If restrictions change, we will be able to offer students even more. We hope you feel reassured and very confident after this year - we will respond effectively to any situation and put the safety and learning of students first at all times.

At the end of the year, I will write a final 2020 letter to all parents in preparation for a positive 2021.

Yours sincerely,

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

Mr M Brailsford  
Principal