



NORTON COLLEGE

Beyond Expectations

Our Ref: TJ/JJA

18 February 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

We have reached the end of a half term which has felt like something of a line in the sand towards a new normal of life after the pandemic. Nevertheless, we know that Covid-19 has not gone away. We continue to see positive cases across students and staff but these numbers have, thankfully, reduced significantly in recent weeks.

As I have said previously, the readjustment to the high levels of expectation that we have of students, both within and outside of lessons, has been straightforward for many but more difficult for others. We depend upon and appreciate your support in re-establishing some of the boundaries within school. We also have a wide range of mechanisms through which to support this readjustment at the college, including adaptations to the curriculum and programmes of study, targeted one-to-one interventions, enrolment in the National Tutoring Programme and employing a professional counsellor.

When we return to school after the half term holiday, we will resume face-to-face assemblies starting with assemblies on expectations and student conduct delivered by Progress Leaders. Assemblies are an important aspect in establishing a collective identity for a year group as well as in creating a sense of formality at the beginning of the school day. We will use these assemblies to check that students are in full uniform, including blazers. Additionally, from Monday 28th February onwards, mentor groups will be re-roomed so that they are located in teachers' main teaching rooms. Students have already been informed of these changes.

I'm sure that you will join me in thanking the college staff for the way in which they have continued to go the extra mile to support your children during a period of such uncertainty. The advent of email communication has many benefits but it can also promote the sense of 24/7 availability. Linked to this, we will always try to respond to queries or issues as soon as possible. Please note, however, that you should not expect a reply outside of working hours.

Consultation on the Length of the School Day

With effect from 1st September 2022, we will no longer be closing early on alternate Mondays to facilitate staff training. This will put Norton College in line with the majority of schools in delivering 50 one-hour lessons per fortnight.

Alongside this, we are opening a consultation with stakeholders on a proposed change to the length of the school day. Under the revised schedule, we would continue to stagger both break and lunchtimes. Although a staggered break and lunchtime allow us to serve students much more quickly than we were able to in the past, unfortunately it is not possible to sit all students in Year 7 to 11 in the canteen simultaneously.

Under the proposal, break would be 20 minutes long and lunch would be 30 minutes long. The school day would continue to start at 8:45am but it would end at 3:00pm rather than 3:15pm. We would continue to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, with students who participate in these allowed early access to the catering facilities.

If you would like to contribute your views on this consultation, please email Lynne Stokoe, PA to the Headteacher, at ls@nortoncollege.net by Friday 18th March. All responses will be carried forward to a Trust Board discussion and decision about this proposal which will take place on Wednesday 6th April 2022.

Assessment and Examinations for Students in Years 11 and 13

Last term we wrote to all parents of students in Years 11 and 13 to outline the government's plans for assessments and examinations in 2022. Within this letter we highlighted the steps that have been taken by the government to ensure that these students are able to complete assessments and examinations in a way that is fair and consistent. One of these arrangements is referred to as advance information. Advance information gives students information about the focus of the content of examinations prior to them taking place. This information was released on Monday 7th February 2022 and this is a clear signal from the government that examinations are expected to take place in the summer of 2022. Advance information applies to all subjects except GCSE English Literature, GCSE History, GCSE Geography and GCSE and A Level Art & Design. In addition, in some subjects, study aids (for example formulae sheets) will be allowed in some exams.

We have created a dedicated page on our school website to share this advance information with you as well as a range of key documents including a copy of the Year 11 and Year 13 mock examination timetables for March and a copy of the respective study guides for each year group. You can access this page [here](#).

Year 9 Options

The deadline for submitting final options choices has now passed. As such, we are now in the process of arranging one-to-one meetings with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. As I outlined to you last week, these meetings are scheduled to take place between 28th February and 11th March. We will contact you from 14th March to confirm your child's options.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

We have been notified by the School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) that they will be visiting the college on Tuesday 1st March to offer first and second Covid-19 vaccinations. Please note that there has been a change to the original guidance and that the Covid-19 vaccination is now being offered to all children in Year 7 to Year 13 who are aged 12 to 17 on 28th February 2022 (the day before the visit). You have already received a link to a letter from SAIS which explains how to give consent for your child to be vaccinated. This letter will also be available via the college website.

As I have explained in my previous letters, Norton College does not hold a view on whether or not children should be vaccinated. No pressure or comment will be made around the decision to take part or not to take part in the vaccination programme. No school staff will be involved in delivering vaccinations.

Attendance

The importance of good attendance at school is now more important than ever. Clearly, where a student is too unwell to attend, s/he should remain at home. Similarly, where a student tests positive for Covid-19, s/he should self-isolate in accordance with government guidelines. However, it is crucial that students' absence is as limited as possible. For example, where a student has a medical appointment, we would only expect him/her to be absent for a part of the day. We continue to celebrate good attendance through a range of different systems including half termly inter-form competitions and prize raffle draws for students who achieve 100% attendance.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support. I hope that you have a restful half term holiday.

Yours faithfully



Mr T Johnson
Headteacher