



17 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you at the end of an unusual academic year which has seen challenges not previously experienced in education. I would like to firstly thank our students, who have dealt with the recent challenges with real resilience and calmness. It has been wonderful to welcome back our Year 10 students over the past few weeks and to continue to see our keyworker students in school. Thank you to all of our students who have engaged so well with online learning and have communicated regularly with us in school.

### **Wellbeing and Support**

We appreciate that the past few months have been difficult and are continuing to provide support over the summer holiday. Our PFSA John Anderson, is available over the summer should your child or family need advice and support. We will also be monitoring our school email inbox [whitstoneinfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:whitstoneinfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk) and will reply to any requests for support as soon as we can. Please keep an eye on our school Facebook page, where we will continue to provide useful information.

### **Staffing**

I hope that you are now aware of all of our staffing changes for September. We have said goodbye to Miss Mel Duncan and Mrs Jacqui Ackroyd who have gone onto opportunities; we wish them well. In their place we welcome Mr Ben Howarth as Assistant Headteacher SENCo and Inclusion and Ms. Debora Pyne as Assistant Headteacher Teaching and Learning/Senior Coach. We are also excited to welcome Miss Chloe Miell as a new English teacher in September, Miss Jilly Griffiths as Geography teacher, Miss Lucy Waters who will be training as a new Science Teacher with us and Miss Laura Sheppard who will be covering Miss Wilson when she starts her maternity leave soon. Finally, we will be joined by Ms. Jane Skipper who will be covering Mrs Ruth Sayer for a period of time. We are very lucky to have retained our wonderful staff group, whilst also adding some outstanding new staff members.

### **Plans for September**

Over the past few months, we have been working hard to develop clear plans for a safe return to school in September. This has also included making plans for the autumn term which continue to prioritise student and staff safety, whilst also returning to some form of normality. Given that there are still a number of weeks to go until September, it would be unwise to publish full plans too soon given the changes we may see over the summer break. As such, I will write to you in the second half of the summer holiday with all of the information you and your child need. We look forward to welcoming back all of our students in September, with Year 7 and 11 students arriving on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September and all other year groups starting on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

## **Transition**

It has been wonderful to visit all of our feeder primary schools over the past few weeks. Our Year 7 group next year, the biggest we have seen for many years, will be fully supported throughout their time at Whitstone School but will receive particular input to help them adjust to a return to school in September. We are very aware of each of our new Year 7 students and have liaised extensively with our primary Headteacher colleagues, SENCos and Year 6 teachers.

## **Home Learning**

Given the anxiety some of our students may feel as they return to school in September, we have decided to focus on the most important aspects of school life over the initial first few weeks. As such, Key Stage 3 will be provided with optional home learning activities set through Google Classroom for students to complete should they wish. This will last for 3 weeks before students begin to return to structured home learning tasks. Students in Year 10 and 11 will receive online home learning which will be completed by all students. I will provide further details on this in my letter in the summer.

## **Parent Council**

Over the past six months, I have really enjoyed meeting with many parents, speaking to a number on the phone and receiving Epraise messages. Your input and thoughts have been really helpful in shaping where we are going as a school, which areas we need to continue and which ones we need to focus our attention over the coming months. Given the positive input from lots of parents over the past six months, I would very much like to set up a Parent Council group for parents to join. This group would meet around once a half-term and would provide feedback regarding specific areas of school, new initiatives we are looking at bringing in and help us to consider new approaches.

If you would like to take part in this group (there will be very minimal input and meetings will be scheduled at times convenient to the group), please simply email [whitstoneinfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:whitstoneinfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk) and I will be in touch in September with further information.

## **Uniform**

We have been overwhelmed with the response to our uniform offer to parents with over a quarter of all parents purchasing uniform through school at a subsidised rate. Thank you also for the positive comments we have received regarding this scheme and the small changes that have been made to ensure our students look particularly smart. We would really appreciate your support in ensuring that we can start the new year, with all of the Covid-19 challenges we are all facing, in a calm and disruption free manner with all students returning to school in the correct uniform. I am hopeful that the guidance we have given has been provided with plenty of time for the correct uniform to have been purchased. If you have any questions regarding this, please do not hesitate to email our school inbox and we remain happy to work with all parents. Our uniform policy is on the website for your information.

Finally, on a personal note I would like to thank you for the support and positive input you have given since I joined Whitstone School as Headteacher in January. During an uncertain time, your support of our staff has been greatly appreciated and enabled us to make real progress in lots of areas of school despite the restrictions we have all experienced.

I would like to wish you and your family a safe and relaxing summer. I look forward to seeing you during the next academic year.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Swallow', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr Guy Swallow

Headteacher