



07.09.20

Dear Parents and Carers

Don't panic - this is not the start of a series of weekly update letters from me. Been there, done that!

I hope you had a good summer after an unprecedented and hugely challenging time for us all.

You may have read in the press and on our social media that students performed very well at GCSE and A level. Their hard work and the tremendous support they received from yourselves and my staff were recognised. I am pleased that students are now on their chosen progression paths into further and higher education, training, apprenticeships, and employment.

It was fabulous to see students and staff return at the end of last week. They are looking well and are pleased to be back. I said hello to all Year 12 students in the common room, and took assemblies with Years 7 and 11. My aims were to welcome and reassure students – I very much hope I achieved these.

The well-being of students and staff is always our main priority. As Ofsted inspectors have pointed out, '*Safeguarding is Job # 1*' for us.

Staff are enthusiastic and I am looking for them to build on the excellent work they did over lockdown. Many of you have complimented the staff's focus upon students' welfare and academic standards. I want you to be continually pleased with our work.

The purpose of this letter is to outline the challenges we will face this academic year and to give you confidence that we have planned a way forward. In terms of the strategy I shared with you during lockdown, we are moving from the *repair* phase. We are now focusing upon *rebuilding* and looking to *strengthen*.

My staff are pleased with the work completed at home by students. Parents and carers deserve congratulations for their support. We know it was not easy for you.

Nevertheless, there are gaps in students' learning. You may have seen a report from the *Royal Society* in the summer which said that missing a third of a year could cause lasting damage to students' education. This, however, will only be the case if students do not have opportunities to catch up. It is my job, with the support of you and the school community, to ensure these opportunities are available to address the learning loss. It will be my focus. Enjoyable, productive learning within a caring environment will boost well-being. Indeed, I have always argued that standards are a safeguarding matter and we should treat them with the same seriousness.



Consistently strong teaching, good student attitudes and a supportive pastoral system will underpin the rebuilding of students' learning. It is the idea of '*Ordinary Magic*' I shared with you in the summer term. Even while we run the school in 'year bubbles', we will provide the necessary continuity, reassurance and support.

Our students and staff are our best assets. They are resilient. They know my expectations and will all be ambitious to progress to the goals set. We'll call these *Happy, Healthy and Successful!*

As parents and carers, you have a key role to play. A continuation of the support offered to students and us during lockdown is needed. High attendance and a focus upon meeting school expectations will be vital. (Attendance on Friday was over 97% which is pleasing.) The communication between us during the lockdown was one of the main reasons for our success during this time. Please tell us what you are happy with and, even more importantly, what you are not happy with. If there is a problem we can solve, we will. If we don't agree with your view of the problem, we will talk it through. I'm good at the fixing and the talking – and, as you know, enjoy doing both!

This is the start of my twenty-first year as headteacher at JKHS. I look forward to each new school year but never as much as this one. I enjoy a challenge, and there has never been a more important one.

On other matters, you may have heard via the local media that, with local authority support, we have secured over £2.3 million for a new science block. We worked on planning over the summer and I will share the project with you over coming months. It's very exciting and shows how secure we are as we move forward.

You will recall the significant issues we had with the IT system from January. (The cyber-attack was our start to 2020! It didn't get much better, did it? Nothing will surprise me this year, but we know that together we can get through anything!) We have undertaken a major strategic and operational review of IT. We have a new provider, extra staffing and have invested heavily in capital. We learned a lot from the provision and systems failure in the spring term. We will see major improvements.

We have built new indoor and outdoor cricket nets. This was partly due to the continuing generosity of the *Clive and Sylvia Richards Charity*. I am hoping Clive and Sylvia can visit us soon to officially open the facilities and see them in operation. That might be one for the spring/summer of 2021.

We have a lot to look forward to. There's enough bad news out there, so let's focus on the positive, look for humour and fun where we can and be kind to each other.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Griffiths', with a horizontal line underneath.