

Headteacher's Blog 11th December - Reflecting on 2020

You will receive today a letter from Richard Gill, CEO for ATLP, confirming end of term arrangements and what to do if you need to report a positive case of Covid19 up to 24th December 2020.

On Tuesday the first patient in the world, Margaret Keenan from Coventry, received the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19. Let us hope this really is the beginning of the end of what has been the most challenging year our country and local community has faced for some time. Let us hope that we can now look forward to 2021 with renewed optimism.

2020 has been a year like no other in education. Never before have schools had to close to the majority of students for such a significant portion of the academic year. Many of our staff, like many of you, have faced personal tragedy, illness and hardship. Many of our students have missed considerable amounts of time from school, missing contact with their social groups and having to learn in new ways through remote learning.

2020 has also been a remarkable year of development and a demonstration of the power of the human spirit to adapt and overcome in the most challenging of circumstances. However, despite these challenges it has also been a year that has had many positive moments that will last long in the memory of the school community. It has been a year in which our school has remained open and, I hope, a focal point for the local community in remaining positive and resilient in the face of adversity.

In March we were visited by Ofsted and received great praise, noting that 'The school places as much emphasis on pupils' personal development as on their academic success'. This twin focus has never been as important as in this year. Throughout the pandemic we have remained open to ensure that, even when closed to most students, those students who needed us could be in school. The summer term seems a lifetime ago with all that passed since, but there were some real highlights such as watching the Key Worker students putting up tents and having a barbecue in the Easter holidays and welcoming back Year 10 and Year 12 for the first time in June. One of the most inspirational moments in my 22 years in education came in the second week of September, when we welcomed back the whole school. More than a tear was shed to see the children back, laughing and smiling to be with each other again.

In time of great adversity change flourishes. Our students are now more independent and our staff have learned to work in different ways. The development of remote learning online has been exponential. Who would have thought that in 8 school months we would have trained teachers how to deliver lessons online, moved all of meetings and professional development to video conferencing, worked out how to 'dial in' students to lessons from home and even enabled teachers who are self-isolating to teach their classes in school from their kitchen table? In education terms it feels like we have leapt forward years in the space of months.

This year also saw the completion of 'The Wilson Block'. We still await our official opening, as we have had to cancel it twice with lockdowns and new tiers, but we look forward to this event in the new-year. It has taken a number of years to bring this project to fruition, but it seems apt that this building was completed in 2020, the quincentenary of our school, which was founded by Alice Digby in 1520. We had a number of celebrations planned but have been unable to hold them. For now, we are working on a virtual celebration, which will be available on our website by the end of term.

Autumn term ends for all students on Friday 18th December at 12.30 pm. Bus companies have been contacted and we anticipate all buses will arrive by 12.30pm to collect the students. All staff will be leaving site by 1pm, once all children have left.

Spring term starts for all students at 8.45 am on Tuesday 5th January 2021. Monday 4th January is the training day for all schools within The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you give to the students and the wider school community. Wishing you a restful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Ian Smith-Childs
Headteacher



Sixth Form Students Celebrating 500 Years

