

July 2021

Mr J Lamb
Headteacher

Dear Parents/Carers

It is fair to say this academic year has been like no other, with the school functioning under Covid restrictions up until Christmas and then another lockdown in January. What I was hugely impressed with was the number of enrichment opportunities that were still on offer despite being in lockdown post- Christmas. The virtual Christmas concert was a highlight, as I was able to watch online despite not having started as Headteacher by then. PE put on a number of 'Teams' Q&A sessions with former students, including athlete Jamie Edwards (Lancaster), professional footballer Emily Syme (Buckingham), Exeter Chiefs' player Harvey Skinner (Lancaster) and, live from Mumbai, England cricketer Jack Leach. Other highlights during lockdown were The Great Castle School Bake Off, photography lockdown competition and virtual choir. The virtual Awards Evening was superb and, although not the same as a live event, it was wonderful to be able to recognise the achievements of our students for showing such endeavour, commitment and resilience, in what has been such a difficult year. We plan to have our full enrichment programme in place for September to ensure we are able to offer the variety and richness you have come to expect.

I would like to thank parents and carers for your support during the school year, in what has been a really stressful and challenging time for many of us. I feel hugely lucky to be able to work alongside many talented colleagues and in partnership with parents and carers, it's a privilege to be the Head at The Castle School. I have spoken to many of you since Christmas and thank you for being so supportive but also for telling us when we get it wrong. This is how we improve, ensuring we get it right for the children in our care. The challenge now is to ensure we minimise the impact of COVID as much as possible, ensuring our curriculum, enrichment and pastoral support are well planned to support all children.

Successes

Well done to the Year 9 Industrial Cadets who reached the national final, just losing out in a very competitive final. They worked so hard on their eco-friendly cricket stadium. Also, well done to the MFL faculty who have been successful in their bid to deliver the Mandarin Excellence programme from September. This programme is open to the new Year 7s and is hugely important in maintaining our commitment to languages at the school.

If you remember over Christmas, it was announced that schools would be required to complete lateral flow testing for staff and students. This was a massive logistical feat and the success of this was testament to the hard work of support staff colleagues in ensuring this ran smoothly. I have thanked the team for their efforts on your behalf.

I feel it is important to recognise the hard work and dedication Year 11 showed towards their assessments this year. With so much uncertainty during the year, in the build up to returning to school after Christmas and then summer examinations being cancelled, they worked so hard and

showed great maturity. It was wonderful to be able to have their final 'Oscars' assembly sharing their successes. I'm so pleased that we will be able to enjoy the Prom on Wednesday with them all. Whilst the 2021 leavers say farewell, they are always part of The Castle School family.

Being able to welcome all students back to school on the 8th March was such a long-awaited moment for me, especially having started in January. Your children have been so adaptable and hardworking; it has been a joy seeing and hearing the school full of students focused in lessons and enjoying school.

Congratulations to Lancaster for winning the House Trophy this year. They celebrated in style with lessons off timetable last week to use the dodgems and inflatables. It was so good to see the students having such fun. Next year we will build on this, as well as introducing a House competition every Friday. This will complement all the other House events throughout the year. All to play for next year and I look forward to the other Houses trying to knock Lancaster off top spot next year!

Well done to Seren Rodgers (Balmoral) for jumping 5.89 in Long Jump which is a PB of 7cm at the England Athletics national competition. There were so many individual achievements and successes as well as great enrichment last year. You can see all of these on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. It is worth remembering what we had and that we have had this temporary pause while we all adjust to the new world living with Coronavirus for the time being.

This year has been a difficult one, with many trips needing to be cancelled or postponed. I was thrilled that we were able to have a full programme for the most recent enrichment days in June. We have reviewed the enrichment days for next year and I am very excited about what we will be able to offer. More information will follow next term.

#NotAtOurSchool

With COVID often taking the headlines I feel its important to highlight our campaign this year, known as #NotAtOurSchool. We are committed to celebrating difference, raising awareness of kindness, empathy, and respect. Talking to the students, they have welcomed our openness talking about issues of discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, and more. This will continue in the Autumn term through assemblies, PSHE and tutor time as well as being reinforced in lessons when appropriate.

September Reopening

As the country moves to Step 4 of the roadmap all protective measures will be reviewed (year group bubbles and hygiene measure are still in place this week) during the summer and we will respond to any changes to the Government guidance in preparation for a return to school in September A useful guide for parents is here [Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak \(applies until Step 4\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The following measures will be in place from September and will be reviewed prior to a return to school:

- Face coverings will no longer be advised for students, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.
- We will keep hand sanitiser in every classroom and communal area to ensure we all maintain good hand hygiene.
- Cleaning regimes will continue.
- Windows will be kept open to maintain good ventilation in classrooms, offices and communal areas.
- We will reinforce good respiratory hygiene the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- At the start of the Autumn term all students will be able to receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart. More information about the organisation of this will follow this week.

Reminder that Year 7 and 11s are due back in on Tuesday 7 September. Year 7s will have their Induction Day, which was not possible last term, and Year 11s will have an introduction to their final year in the first part of the day and lessons will start from Period 3 onwards.

The school day September 2021

8.40 am	School Begins
8.45 am -9.10 am	Registration
9.10 am – 10.10 am	Period 1
10.10 am – 11.10 am	Period 2
11.10 am – 11.30 am	Break
11.30 am – 12.30 pm	Period 3
12.30 pm – 1.30 pm	Period 4
1.30 – 2.15 pm	Lunch
2.15 pm	Warning bell for end of lunch
2.20-3.20 pm	Period 5
3.20 pm	End of School

Farewell to Staff

Many parents write in and thank staff for what they do and this is always appreciated. I make a point of reading out any comments by parents in staff briefing and it is always nice to know hard work and going above and beyond what is expected is appreciated.

Congratulations to Miss Evett (Science) who is achieving her ambition of working in post-16 provision at Exeter College. Mr Stewart (Humanities) who is moving to a school closer to home. Mrs Asheshov (MFL) who is going to join her family business. Mrs Crook (Teaching Assistant) is leaving to pursue a new in social work, Miss Cross and Miss Taylor (Teaching Assistant) are leaving to gain different experiences as part of their journey to become teachers and Miss Johnson (Teaching Assistant) is leaving to fulfil her ambition to be an Educational Psychologist.

Mrs Gormley will be retiring at the end of this term, after 36 years at the school. Yes, 36 years, she started at the Castle School in 1985! I am sure many parents and carers may have been taught by her over the years. I have known Mrs Gormley since starting at the Castle School in 2011 and I have never met anyone who is so fiercely committed to ensuring your children get the best possible education we can. She is child-centred and has never relented on ensuring students get the best. She has been instrumental in shaping the ethos and culture that runs through the very DNA of The Castle, developing the curriculum your child experiences every day. Over the years she has been Head of Sandringham house, involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Award, school trips to outdoor pursuit centres, skiing trips, teaching children the valuable life skill of cooking for themselves and much more. Even in the final week of term she is working tirelessly to ensure we are well prepared for the Autumn term. We are indebted to the service Mrs Gormley has provided to this community over four decades and I will ensure we say farewell in style this week and I will thank her on your behalf.

Whilst we will miss our colleagues and friends, we are always able to recruit outstanding new staff and this year has been no exception. We have some wonderful new colleagues joining us this year. New staff are Miss Andres (Teacher of Spanish), Mr Barnes (Teacher of Computing), Miss Crossan (Teacher of Science), Mrs Matthews (Teacher of English), Mr Sinnott (SEMH Intervention Lead) and Miss Tyler (Teacher of Art). Students have been central in making those appointments and all candidates on interview and successful new staff have commented, without exception, that our children are a strength of the school. A school is only as good as the people in it, and we are very lucky to have such wonderful children in this school. I have attached the full staff list for next year to allow you to see where new staff fit into the school.

Uniform

I would like to reiterate we expect the uniform to be always worn correctly. **Reminder that skirts must be the regulation school skirt and on the knee.** There will be no exceptions to this. I thank you in advance for your support, as you know I feel a smart appearance is important but also to keeping that sense of belonging, I also feel it encourages a sense of community, identity and pride.

As I said in my first letter to you all back in January, uniform is an important part of life at The Castle School. We expect that trousers, skirts and shoes meet that standard – that is no Lycra skirts or trousers, or jeans, or anything stretchy or clingy. Non-uniform skirts are not acceptable and students will be sent home to change or to buy the right skirt. We will not compromise on this and I will always make a point of saying this very clearly in the Open Evening and Induction Day speeches so you as parents know what to expect. Shoes must be black leather or leather-look, as defined in the Uniform Policy (attached). A reminder also, all students must wear either the correct school PE shorts, skorts or plain black leggings and a plain white polo shirt. Any piercings apart from one small stud earring in each ear, are not allowed and students will have to remove additional piercings, including any transparent piercings. Unnatural hair colours are not allowed. Refusal to wear uniform correctly is defiance of school rules and will be sanctioned accordingly.

I have also enclosed a copy of the School Academic Year Diary 2021-22. Some dates may change throughout the year, so please check the school website for the most up to date information. All

letters for parents are also on the website so I would encourage you to check every week to ensure you know what is happening.

Finally, thank you on behalf of all the staff here at The Castle School for your continued support and encouragement. We frequently receive very nice letters and compliments about the school and about your children, which I always appreciate, I also appreciate it when parents tell us we have got something wrong so we can put it right between us. I do believe that the school is as good as it is because of the partnership we have between parents and school.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mr Lamb', written in a cursive style.

Mr Lamb

