

12<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Year 10 & 12 students,

I hope you are well and that you and your families are keeping safe?

I wanted to write to let you know that we are thinking about you all every day and I am continually discussing and reviewing the progress that you are all making with the leadership team, your teachers and the pastoral team.

I have been in school for the majority of days, along with the leadership team and other staff and the school is a far too quiet place without our amazing students ... we miss you all!

You will be hearing lots in the news about Year 10 and 12, so I wanted to write to update you on the school's position regarding bringing Year 10 and 12 back to school.

Following the Government update on Sunday 10 May and the announcement of the proposed lockdown exit strategy, although the 'road map' for this process looks as if it may be longer than some would want, I can share that you will very sadly not be returning to school as 'normal' this academic year.

It has taken us a few days to come to terms with this, as we have been hoping that schools would be able to bring Year 10 & 12 back before the summer for a full timetable of lessons. However, we need to remember that the Government plan will be a well thought out one and will be focused on the safety and welfare of us all. The current view that has been shared with schools is to plan to bring back Year 10 and 12 this academic year, albeit in a reduced and very carefully considered way.

The wording from the Department for Education (DFE) 'Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June guidance for parents and carers', updated 11 May 2020, outlines:

- *Can children return to school?*

*From the week commencing 1 June, we (DFE) are asking:*

- *Secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges to begin planning for some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils, although we do not expect these pupils to return on a full-time basis at this stage.*

Therefore, the leadership team and I have been working hard over the past few days on a sensible plan to be able to provide this opportunity for face to face support for as soon as possible. However, I must make it clear that schools have been asked to 'plan a return' at this stage and we need to remember that this may change if the national agenda needs to be amended.

Over the remainder of this week and next week, we have meetings planned with the Heads of Departments and key operational and pastoral staff so we can complete our plans to be able to bring Year 10 and 12 back into school. As I have said already, this will be in a very reduced and highly coordinated way to keep everyone safe.

I will not share any of the specific details of our plans with you now until these are finalised, but please be reassured that we have a great plan being put in place and that we have put a lot of hard work into this process to make sure that we get it right for you all. Whatever we put in place will be in your best interests and for any periods of time that you will not be in school learning will continue via Show My Homework and the other systems being used.

I really wish that things could have been more normal for you this year, I feel very sad for you all, as you all really do deserve the best and this situation is not ideal. I hope we can make your future years a really special time for you ... I am sure we will be able to do this, even though it is not clear what September will look like just yet?

Although, due to this challenging situation we continue to find ourselves in, you will not be ending this academic year in the normal way, please remember that you will always have the schools ongoing support for your future learning, so please email us with any questions you have regarding your work if you need any help and we will respond promptly.

Finally, I would like to say to you all, that for Giles Academy the Year 10 and 12 are amazing young people to work with!

The staff feel extremely privileged to be able to work with you all.

You are working hard and continue to show dedication and commitment to your studies. Additionally, you have all shown an extremely mature attitude in the way you have dealt with this situation ... we feel so proud of you all!

I will be writing to you next week to share the detailed plans for how we intend to start to bring Year 10 & 12 back into school, if this continues to be the plan that the Government encourages.

In the meantime, I know it is a difficult time for you all, please try and get some exercise in the fresh air; support each other; be kind to your friends and supportive of your family ... stay safe ... stay positive ... and email us whenever you need to!

Thinking of you all - with my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Belcher', written in a cursive style.

Katie Belcher  
Deputy Headteacher