

WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

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09 July 2021

Dear Parents

This academic year has seen the best of times and the worst of times. Just as it has been worldwide, this has been a time of great anxiety and uncertainty for the entire Grove community. However, it is clear that the resilience, positivity and creativity demonstrated by our pupils and staff, who have adapted superbly to these unique circumstances, has been quite outstanding. I have been enormously proud of them all and have genuinely enjoyed watching them rise to the challenges and do things they did not believe they could, or would ever have to, do.

Trying to find the time and space to reflect on all that has happened, whilst so much is still happening, is not easy. However, I see this process of reflection as being hugely important. What we have to accept is that Covid-19 has changed things; we should try to resist just going back to how it was and instead work to embrace positive changes we can make. Our students and staff have been much more adaptable to change than we might have expected before the pandemic.

Perhaps the greatest success over this incredibly challenging period is that pupils and staff have simply found ways to carry on, to keep learning, to keep smiling and to make the best of the situation. The outcomes have been quite remarkable. Student attainment has – in the vast majority of cases – indicated no loss of learning whatsoever. Supportive interventions have continued to address the few areas of concern. In contrast to many of their maintained sector counterparts, there is plenty of evidence that our students have continued to make significant progress even during this unsettled period.

At last Saturday's Year 13 Leavers' Celebration, I reflected on the fact that our 2021 Leavers' greatest legacy to the Grove lies in what they have given each other and the rest of our community. Those small but important every-day moments of kindness, friendship and generosity of spirit. The Grove is a special place because our young people make it that way. Accepting of the fact that they are all individuals yet knowing they are part of something bigger.

The current generation of Grovians have been hit hard by Covid-19. In the months that have passed, they have had to adapt, learn, re-organise, re-think and re-imagine how they work. Out of war time, I cannot think of a group of young people of whom more has been asked, or from whom more has been taken. However, our students are also a generation that is politically aware, socially responsible and engaged with the world. Like those before them, the current crop of Grovians display energy, creativity and a sense of purpose and this has never been more evident than over the last 16 months. When they returned to school, full-time, last September, it was clear that, as a result of their enforced time away, they had a unique sense of the value, not just of education, but of community and social interaction. This could well turn the Grovians of today into a remarkable and powerful generation.

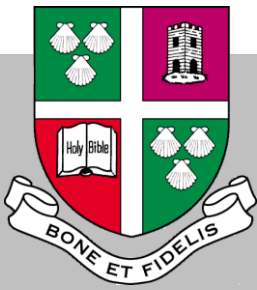
Thanks to the advent of Teacher Assessed Grades, this term has been a very intense period, creating a huge additional workload for our teachers, who have also had to turn around End of Year assessments for other year groups whilst meeting tight Reporting deadlines. While setting, marking and moderating Year 11 and Year 13

Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NR
enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk

I am Grovian.



Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.
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is also warmly welcome, if more than a little overdue. The scrapping of bubbles and zonal working will remove some of the current barriers to offering our students the full Woodhouse Grove experience, and we very much hope that the Autumn Term and its routines will feel much more familiar.

But – there is always a but! – it is important to note that this is not an all-or-nothing situation and a system of controls will remain in place, including the flexibility to reintroduce more stringent measures in the event of local outbreaks of coronavirus. This will be logistically challenging but seems a prudent and reassuring safeguard. Furthermore, the requirement for secondary school students to be given two on-site Covid tests at the start of the Autumn Term will also present logistical challenges which have, once again, been landed on schools without much thought. Where necessary, the Government must step up to the mark and provide all schools – not just those in the Maintained sector – with the necessary support to deliver this public health requirement.

In my view, and without wishing to sound like the harbinger of doom, we are not fully out of the woods yet, and the progress of the virus will need to be closely monitored in the Autumn Term and probably beyond, but I sincerely hope that the new system of controls announced this week marks an important step towards a much more normal and settled educational experience for our children next term and beyond.

Having navigated our way through to the end of the academic year, in a backdrop of the easing of national restrictions and systems of control in schools, now is perhaps the time to consider what the future of education will look like in a post-pandemic world. The reality is that we simply do not know what the next 18 to 24 months will hold. I am hearing calls from some that education needs to be radically different, whilst other commentators and eminent educationalists are promoting a more cautious approach of 'let us wait and see'.

For my part, I am enormously grateful for your continued support and encouragement and am very much looking forward to pressing the 'reset button' on a new academic year in September. In the meantime, I wish everyone the very best for a little rest and relaxation over the summer holiday.

With all my best wishes,

Yours sincerely

James Lockwood MA
Headmaster

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