

21st December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the families that Isaac Newton Academy serves a happy and joyful festive period. I hope that our students have a restful break, stay safe and healthy during the holiday period.

After one full term as Principal, I can certainly conclude its been one of the more challenging periods in my leadership journey to date. Perhaps the hardest aspect of my job since September is trying to initiate the required improvements in the COVID19 context, which has ultimately made things slower and harder to achieve. However, the biggest challenge has been finding ways to connect with students, staff and families during this period. Despite the barriers, I have enjoyed my first term, with many highlights and importantly having absolute clarity on work that must be done at INA to make it one of the best schools in the nation.

Ultimately, what I am most proud of this term is the bravery our students, staff and families have shown this academic year. We have achieved so much, in which we have overcome numerous obstacles and challenges, that will eventually see us grow stronger in the new year and beyond. Therefore, I wish to extend a thank you to our families for their commitment and support.

Attendance

Our attendance data, despite the obvious disruption, has been positive. See below for a summary of the attendance for the autumn term.

Year Group	Attendance % (YTD)
Year 7	97.31
Year 8	95.76
Year 9	95.85
Year 10	95.12
Year 11	95.15
Year 12	95.68
Year 13	94.95



Virtual Learning Strategy

Since the beginning of September, we have worked hard to improve our remote educational provision. I wanted to stress that although attendance figures above are strong, they nonetheless hide the impact of COVID19 on students having to isolate. Therefore, I ask all parents/carers for support to ensure that all students who are either self-isolating or simply working remotely in the Spring term follow our expectations laid out in our strategy (see link below) to help ensure curriculum gaps do not emerge.

- <https://isaacnewtonacademy.org/page-strips/remote-learning-ms-teams>

Climate for learning

A key area for improvement is our climate for learning. Essentially, our classroom culture, which requires greater emphasis on students displaying higher levels of professionalism and growth mindset. In order to achieve excellent academic outcomes our learning environment must act as key facilitating factor. Consequently, students will have a programme on their first day in the spring term that will reset expectations, especially focusing on the positive behaviours we expect to see inside our classrooms and specifically related to COVID19 measures outside of classrooms e.g. break/lunch.

Independent learning

Independent learning plays a pivotal role in the academic outcomes' students secure. If we can consider a period from September to September, on average each student only spends 13% of their time being taught by a teacher. Consequently, the knowledge our students gain must be supported by a rigorous and purposeful independent learning strategy to enable our students to compete with those leaving the top performing state and private schools. I am raising this because data for completion of independent learning suggests that we need to explore further the effectiveness of our current IL strategy. Consequently, we will carry out a review in the Spring term, which will include the use of effective digital platforms to support students and families. In the meantime, I ask all parents/carers to ensure their child is completing their independent learning to a high standard and meeting all academic deadlines.

Enrichment

I wanted to inform families that where possible, following our robust COVID19 safety measures, some enrichment activities will begin in the Spring term. We believe that we must slowly start to ensure that our students experience at the academy begins to reflect the period before the pandemic. There will be more information communicated in the new year regarding enrichment.

Literacy

A key observation during the autumn term is the importance in developing the literacy and oracy skills of our students. Lesson visits have revealed a clear focus on developing our students public speaking skills e.g. clarity of speech, voice projection and sentence structure. I believe that strong literacy and oracy skills foster confidence, which is crucial for students to learn successfully and important in any future career. Therefore, I ask for continued support in prioritising your child's reading at home, with a target of



30 minutes each day. Further communication will be made in the new year regarding our plans in this area.

COVID-19

I appreciate that COVID19 has caused great disruption to education, which will continue into the new year. However, I believe that the measures we have in place at the academy have enabled us to deliver a safe and effective learning environment. Additionally, I am confident that the proposed new methods of regular testing for staff and students will contribute positively to the measures already in place. Unfortunately, I cannot confirm specific details of measures circulating in the media until we receive official communication from the DFE. Our focus remains on these areas:

- Effective contact tracing by ensuring students do not make physical contact with each other and maintain the correct distance, especially during break/lunch. This will be supported by students following a robust seating plan arrangement in classrooms, line-up, assemblies and during family dining.
- Our policy remains consistent on face coverings and on hand hygiene, as these remain critical aspects on COVID-19 safety.
- Continuing to follow latest government and DFE guidance on managing COVID19 symptoms and positive cases amongst students and staff.

There will be separate communication regarding COVID19 in the new year to ensure parents/carers are given an update on any new changes to COVID19 measures.

Student progress review meetings (Y7-11)

We will be making a temporary change to how we communicate with families regarding their child's progress. I wish to ensure that during this period of instability that we provide important information and contact points with our families. Consequently, we will be holding a Student Progress Review Meeting via Zoom for students in Y7-11. This will be a review meeting of your child's autumn term academic report with their tutor. Further communication about this event will be provided in the new year.

- 21st January 2020 14:00-18:30

Start of term arrangements (Secondary only)

There has been some very late communication from the government regarding the arrangements for the beginning of term. Consequently, we have had to revise our plans. See below for the new arrangements following the DFE's announcement regarding a staggered start in the new year.

- Year 11, 12 and 13 students will return as planned from the 6th January.
- Years 7-10 will return on the 11th January. These year groups will be expected to follow our remote learning provision during 6th to 8th January.
- Students classified as vulnerable and those whose parents are key workers will have the opportunity to attend the academy from 6th January.



ISAAC NEWTON
ACADEMY

There will be further communication detailing the start of term arrangements posted on our website.

Finally, I wanted to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and again wish you all the very best over the holiday period.

Yours sincerely

Morgan Haines
Principal