

20.5.2020

**Consultation for change for term dates**

**Autumn Term 20/21**

Dear Parent/ Carer,

The impact of the COVID-19 virus has been significant nationally, on the education of all young people. Whilst here at Bramfield we are striving to reduce that impact during the lockdown, my attention is now turning to the ways that this pandemic has specifically affected our pupils with their SEMH needs. Many of our pupils struggle with transitions and by September will have had 6 months away from school, its structure, the expectations and the pressure of learning in a classroom environment. Some pupils will be apprehensive about this and will really struggle with the inevitable changes to the school environment due to the COVID-19 safety measures.

Relationships are absolutely key to the philosophy at Bramfield House School and many pupils will have missed playing with their friends and the support of trusted adults. The social development of pupils will have been significantly affected and there will be great deal of work to proactively undertake to get pupils settled and happy in the environment again.

Although we don't know as yet what the guidance for schools will be from the government in September, it is my intention to start to plan to do everything possible to support our pupils as the school returns in the new academic year. My view is that schools will be requested to return full time from September. As a result, I am writing to you with a proposal to change the school term dates for the autumn term this coming academic year 20/21.

We would like pupils to return before the start of September and begin the year with at least 2 weeks of social development programming for the whole school. This would enable us to address the following matters;

- Allowing staff to support our current Year 11 pupils in their transition to college, which will be vital for their future success.
- Team building and relationship building activities with their new class, a chance to get to know their friends again and connect with their support mechanisms.



- A gentle easing into their academic studies, the rules and expectations of classroom conduct and new COVID-19 classroom arrangements.
- Safe induction into the new safety measures introduced in school and developing a proper understanding of why things have changed.
- A chance to have key working sessions and provide coping mechanisms for pupils who struggle with their anxiety and mental health, specifically in relation to worries around being close to others.
- A chance for pupils who access therapeutic interventions to do so without the added pressure of a 'formal school day'
- An opportunity for the school to have fun and come together as a community through our annual sports day and summer BBQ.

The proposal is that the school will return a week earlier than usual during the summer holidays. The intention then would be to have an additional weeks holiday added to the October half term break (see dates below). The consequence of this will be a two week holiday within a very long autumn term.

Many of you will have had to cancel holidays over the summer period. Whilst we don't know as yet what the arrangements for tourism will be, this proposal would provide a substantial break in the school term for families and staff to plan alternative arrangements, with bookings then being 'off peak'.

Pupils may object to returning to school earlier than mainstream schools. However with the activities planned it is hoped that we can encourage pupils to come into school especially if they know it's not 'learning' in a classroom. After such a long time away from school, I would hope pupils would be eager to return and engage in the proposed transition back into the daily school life of Bramfield.

Pupils in the current year 11 would be invited back into school for a 'preparation week' prior to their transition onto further education.

**The term date changes would be as follows:**

**New Return from the summer**

Term starts Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020 (Start Time: 8:45am) (\*Inset Days Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

**New October half term**

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October – Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (inclusive)



**Consultation**

Because of this proposal, I am welcoming views from Parents and Carers before these changes are formalised or implemented. This is an opportunity for the school to hear your concerns or objections to the change and for these to be taken into consideration when making a final decision.

Staff are also being consulted in relation to this proposed change and once all stakeholders have been consulted, a final decision will be made by 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and Parents, Pupils and Staff will be informed of the outcome.

A special “zoom” student council meeting for pupils to contribute their thoughts will take place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 at 11:00am Links to this will be forwarded to parents of pupils who sit on the Student Council.

Please provide your thoughts to me directly in writing at [d.bell@bramfieldhouse.co.uk](mailto:d.bell@bramfieldhouse.co.uk) by **3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020**. Everyone’s opinions will be taken into account and every effort will be made to negate and limit the possible impact of the change.

Sincerely,



Davina Bell

BA (HONS) MA MA PGCE

*encl: current term dates 20/21*

