

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

16th October 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It has felt like a very long half term for everyone here at The Purcell School (students and staff alike) but I am delighted to have reached this first milestone without having had any disruption to our operations. Unlike almost every other school in the area, we have not had any positive cases of Covid-19 contracted within school or affecting any students. Whilst this feels like a strange thing to celebrate, it does represent a considerable achievement and is thanks to the diligence with which students and staff have observed the measures we put in place – difficult and restrictive as many of these have been. But these measures have enabled us to teach face-to-face (with all the benefits that brings) and to have enjoyed some wonderful live music (which has been such a privilege).

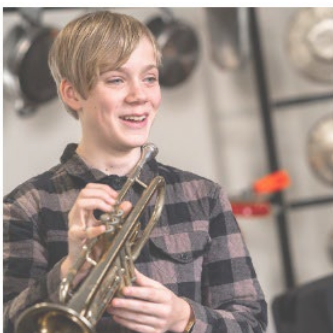
Crystal Ball Gazing/Half Term Break

We will all be aware of the changing picture across the UK and many other countries. As a result of this, I would ask all families (especially those of boarders) to be particularly mindful about where students are going, who they are seeing and what they are doing over the half term break. It is vital for the safe return of the whole school community that students do not put themselves at risk over the half term nor that they expose

themselves to any situations likely to put the school at risk. It's a horrible thing to ask, but if we want to get through next half term "unscathed", we all need to take a cautious approach to our activities over half term.

There has been a great deal of talk about a national "circuit break" lockdown for two weeks coinciding with the main half term period within the UK. For us, this would most likely

coincide with the second week of our break plus the first week of our return. Currently, the Government are ruling it out, but I wouldn't like to assume that this makes it unlikely! Were this to happen, we may have to revert to remote working for the first week back. I hope this does not happen but we will be in touch as soon as we are able should such an announcement come during the course of next week.



Boardingware

In these current times it is even more important we know where students are. After half term we are launching Boardingware, an app-based checking-in system that will be used across school. When a student is not in a lesson or other organised activity, they will now need to check in wherever they are so that staff are able to find them if needed. We will have a checkpoint in every boarding house for all students to use but, rather than have people traipsing across the school every time they go to a different practice

space just to sign in, we ask that all students who own a compatible Android or iPhone download the Boardingware app. This is by no means a way of actively tracking students, and doesn't use GPS data or anything else to track locations, rather it is simply a way for students to check in remotely without going back to a boarding house to do it manually. You can find the app on the App Store or on Google Play by searching **Boardingware Student** and all students will be receiving an invitation email

to their school accounts over half term. For parents, the move to Boardingware has added benefits for managing exeats and absence requests, and will help us streamline these processes. For more information on Boardingware or if you have any questions please visit their [website](#) or drop an email to your houseparent.



Parents Consultation Meetings

Parents of students in Year 11 are invited to an online Parents' Consultation Meeting

with academic staff between 16:00 and 18:00 on Friday 6th November.

Full details will be sent out shortly.



Safeguarding

One of the negative factors associated with the extended lockdown period is a rise in the development of eating disorders, particularly amongst teenagers. Schools across the UK are finding that students have developed concerns over their body image and associated eating habits during the extended period away from school and as students return home for two weeks to places that are currently or potentially going into a more restrictive tier we wanted to provide you with some signposts to support students through this time.

Eating disorders are complex mental illnesses and can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or background. There is a perception, particularly on social media, that being in lockdown has had a negative effect on weight and body image and many young people are becoming anxious

about whether their body has changed. There is a lot of talk about losing weight after lockdown on social media and this may increase a young person's worries around food, weight and shape. In an increasingly physically isolated world, many young people are spending more time online in order to feel connected to others. Some young people are being exposed to triggering content about food and exercise on social media and it is important that we support them to take breaks from any potentially harmful interactions in the social media sphere. It can be helpful to set limits on the times of day or number of hours one can spend on social media, and there are many apps available to help students manage this.

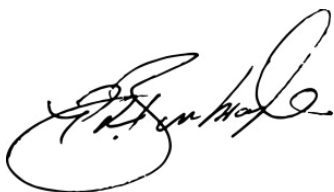
There is a lot of support available, both in school and out. If you have any concerns you want to discuss with

the school, the safeguarding team are available by email (safeguarding@purcell-school.org) throughout the half term break as well as in term time.

Support is also available from **Beat**, the UK's eating disorder charity. They are a champion, guide and friend for anyone affected by an eating disorder. Beat have a helpline, can be contacted by email, and are also able to provide interpreters if needed. For more information please visit www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

It only remains for me to wish you a safe, happy and healthy half term and to thank you for your support so far.

With all good wishes,



Paul Bambrough
Principal

