



# PRESDALES SCHOOL

*Achievement for all*

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Dear Parents/Carers

It has been so nice to welcome the students into Sixth Form and whilst we know many of them were anxious about the new 'bubble' system and also what the academic year ahead will hold for them, they seem very happy to be back in the classroom. We have welcomed Mr Britton to the Sixth Form Team and he has taken up the position of Head of Year 12. Mrs Finch is the Head of Year 13 and Mrs Preshous is our Sixth Form Administrator. Plus, we still have 12 tutor groups, with 17 experienced tutors.

## **Mental Health**

Sixth Form can be a difficult time for students as they navigate their way through their A Levels, decide on a career path, as well as handling life as they enter adulthood, plus this year we have to add in the additional pressures as a consequence of coronavirus. Therefore, it is even more important that the students talk to us if they have any concerns. Support is always on hand from form tutors and the Sixth Form team, plus we have an in-house counsellor who works 3 days a week and we can make a referral for a student to see her. Whilst students are working towards academic outcomes, their health and wellbeing is just as important.

## **Curriculum and target grades**

The set up for Year 12 is very different to when the students were in the lower school as most of them have chosen to specialise in three subject areas. This means their timetable looks very different. Most students will have 15 periods of lessons, 1 period of PE, 2 periods of supervised study and 12 study periods – they should use this time wisely!

In order to monitor progress and have an idea of the minimum outcome expected at the end of each subject, the school use a system called ALPS. For each student this generates a target grade for each of their A Level subjects, taking into account their GCSE point score. Some students may well have high target grades and we don't want them to be stressed by this when they receive them. Please remind them, as we will, that this is a 2-year course, which they have only just started. Target grades can also be exceeded, so they can use this for motivation as well. We monitor their progress throughout the year but communicate this home to you at three points – November, February and June.

Year 12 will have assessments in the Spring Term and they will sit mock exams 7<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June. Please impress the importance on your daughter/son as these will heavily influence their predicted grades.

## **Independent Study**

Students will be expected to complete 4-5 hours of homework, per subject, per week. They should use their study periods productively as well as completing work outside of school hours. Examples of things students can do to study independently are:

- Printing off and highlighting key points on exam specifications
- Printing off and getting to know mark schemes
- Reading examiners' reports on students' answers in previous years.
- Making use of book lists and reading around topics to be studied in class
- Researching articles in subject-related journals/magazines.
- Completing exam Qs and checking answers against mark schemes regularly
- Seeking out teachers and making appointments with them to go through work that you don't understand.
- Making study timetables and sticking to them

## **Extra-Curricular**

Due to restrictions regarding students mixing with other year groups, we have fewer extra-curricular opportunities this year which is disappointing. One opportunity we are still able to run is the EPQ. This is known as the Extended Project Qualification. The students have to apply to do an EPQ due to limited spaces and they will start it in December and finish it in July. It is their chance to take ownership of a project, where they choose their topic, their title or question and carry out research to find an answer. They could also create an artefact rather than write an essay. Some universities offer lower entry requirements if they achieve an A or B.

## **Work Experience and Careers Support**

We encourage students to undertake work experience where relevant and will allow five days absence from school for WEX. We appreciate this may be more difficult at the moment due to government guidelines with social distancing.

In March we focus on Careers with Year 12 and we run a Careers Morning, where a number of parents and alumni speak to the students about their careers, routes in to it and qualifications needed to broaden the knowledge of the students about the types of opportunities which are out there. If this is something you would like to be a part of or if you are able to offer any of our students' work experience/shadowing, please complete this [google survey](#).

If possible, we will take Year 12 to a UCAS/Apprenticeship exhibition so they can talk to a range of institutions about the courses they offer and the entry requirements. We also offer an evening for parents to explain the Post 18 options available to your daughter/son and how you can support them with researching the right route for them.

**Dress Code**

Year 12 look really smart and I am pleased with the way they have embraced the Sixth Form Dress Code. Please can I remind you that facial piercings are not allowed in Sixth Form and students will be expected to remove them.

**Driving and Part Time Employment**

Turning 17 is an exciting time for students as many of them start having driving lessons. However, driving lessons and the driving theory test cannot be taken during the school day. We will however authorise absence for the driving practical test as we know these are difficult to book.

Many students choose to have a part time job and whilst this has many benefits, we strongly advise that students work no more than 10 hours per week as anything over this tends to have a negative impact on school achievement. Part time work should not be carried out during school hours.

I hope your child has settled in well in the Sixth Form and they are pleased to be back in a classroom environment. I know the staff are pleased to have them back. Please do email me ([SimmondsK@presdales.herts.sch.uk](mailto:SimmondsK@presdales.herts.sch.uk)) or Mr Britton ([TB@presdales.herts.sch.uk](mailto:TB@presdales.herts.sch.uk)) if you have any further questions. We look forward to working with you over the next two years.

Mrs K Simmonds  
Head of Sixth Form