Dear parents / guardians

Unfortunately, we remain in an area of High Risk for Covid infections and the rate is still rising. It is looking like our area will face further restrictions next week. Once again, we are not expecting these to affect schools and colleges, so we continue plan to remain fully open to all our students until half term.

Feedback from students and staff is that the current college format and weekly timetable is working well. We are reflecting on the 2-hour lessons and teaching staff are discussing and sharing ideas about how we can offer outstanding teaching and learning for students in these longer blocks of learning.

In terms of Covid cases, I am glad to report that again there has only been a very small change to the numbers I reported to you at the end of last week. We have 8 positive cases amongst our student population (of around 2300 students) and 2 members of staff who have had positive tests. Can I reassure you that all those individuals directly affected by any of these positive cases were told and asked to self-isolate within an hour of us being informed as a college. We do wish all those affected a speedy recovery.

We do now have a number of staff and students self-isolating as they have been in contact with a positive case. The vast majority still have no symptoms and/or have had negative test results, but they will not return to college until they have completed the required period of self-isolation.

We currently have 6 members of teaching staff away from college self-isolating with the Business Studies and Economics departments being affected the most. These staff are continuing to deliver their lessons as planned remotely via Microsoft Teams. I can still report there is no evidence of any college transmission of Covid 19 amongst any of our positive cases.

A couple of updates for parents and guardians of Upper 6th Students

- You should have received a message via parentmail inviting you to an online parent meeting on Monday 19th October at 6:30pm. This will provide you with an update on the year ahead for the Upper 6th students, explain the catch-up work that has taken place and there will be an opportunity for Q & A.
We are moving these events to Microsoft Teams as opposed to the Zoom platform we have used previously— you should not need any special software to view and it should be accessible on all devices. The link for the meeting is as follows:

https://tinyurl.com/yy9zmyot

- The Carmel UCAS deadline for students applying to competitive courses, such as medicine and dentistry is the 15th October; the deadline for all other courses is just after the half term holiday. All universities are currently providing virtual tours and other online recruitment opportunities. Some of Carmel’s key university partners are carrying out bespoke presentations and Q&A sessions for students in our 10:10 lessons and I would encourage all students (and parents) to have a look at some of these.

We are also running our first virtual, open event for prospective students next week. Again, I would encourage you to share and have a look for yourselves at our virtual college tour and introduction which is now live.

https://www.carmel.ac.uk/applying/open-events/

October is Black History Month and the college has been celebrating this through a range of activities; there is more information on the College Connect site. We have been asking students to produce a piece of art or writing to help us celebrate the month. There is some fantastic work on college’s Equality and Diversity twitter feed.

https://twitter.com/CarmelEandD

This Saturday is World Mental Health Day and this year’s theme is, ‘Mental Health for All’. As we are not in college we are asking our students and staff to wear green on Friday 9th October to raise awareness about Mental Health. This year has been extremely tough on everybody and we want to show there is plenty of support available for anyone who is struggling. The Mental Health Foundation’s ‘Tea & Talk’ fundraiser is back and it is a great way to come together during this difficult time and enjoy a virtual cuppa and a catch up. We encourage you to pick up the phone or create a Zoom call and enjoy a chat with your friends, family, work colleagues or even someone you haven’t spoken to in a while.

Stay safe

Mike Hill
Principal