

Head's Second April Update

Dear All

Just a short update to keep you all in touch with what is happening school-wise since my last newsletter. Most of you will now have received a call or at least an email from your tutor to keep up-to-date and to check in on how you are doing.

Feedback about the changes that we have made since Easter have been very positive and students (and parents!) are managing the workload and communication a lot better. Indeed – we have had some brilliant pieces of work submitted to staff and a number of students have been receiving Headteacher Commendations this week.

Our current actions

Full re-opening of schools is still some time in the future but a lot of work is being done to prepare for this. These are just some of the things that we are doing at the moment:

- We are trying our best to acquire appropriate PPE and cleaning equipment so that we can ensure that every classroom has a hygiene station and we have plenty of hand sanitiser.
- We are discussing how we may go about management of social distancing and scoping how many pupils we can safely place in each class.
- We are purchasing tape so that markings can be placed on the ground to ensure that students know what an appropriate distance is to stay apart from others.
- We are liaising with our catering provider to work out how we might provide catering provision when some students start to return to school.
- The school's cleaning company has used the time during school closure to conduct a deep clean to ensure the environment is clean and sanitised.
- We are liaising with the local authority, DfE and union bodies to work out procedures for a potential future return.
- We are considering various models of timetable, year group attendance, lunch sittings, what socially distanced teaching will look like and whether or not students attend school in sittings.
- Heads of South Ribble Schools are co-operating closely to ensure that we share the best practice possible.

These are just a few of the things that are taking place. There is no indication that schools are going to be opening soon, these are just some of the things that have to be thought about and done before any other decisions can be made.

Do schools know when lockdown will end?

The reality is that lockdown is not going to just 'end'. There will be a phased return for all aspects of society. It is unlikely that unnecessary social gatherings will be allowed to take place at all until a vaccine has been produced. Consequently we informed our Year 11 students this week that although we would like to be able to have some form

of celebration with them, we do not yet know what this would look like or when it could take place. They may be well into their post-16 study/training/employment before we have the chance to gather socially!

We are also very conscious of what it is going to be like for current Year 6 students who have been told that they will be coming to Balshaw's next school year. We are discussing how we might make their transition the best possible experience to ensure that they have a positive start to their high school experience.

I guess that the one thing that we do know is that there is a lot that we still don't know! In the meantime, we are still here for our students whether that's by email or phone. I hope that you have been following some of the amazing things that some of our current and former students have been doing on our Twitter feed.

Year 11 students guaranteed a place at Runshaw:

Our Year 11 students know Tim Cahill from Runshaw very well. He has been in touch this week with the following message:

Please rest assured that as a student of Balshaw's, if you applied within the deadline, you will have a place at Runshaw. The only conditions attached to this are what you have applied for, and then in August what grades you achieve.

I suppose it's a bit like having a chair with your name on it at Runshaw. Which class that goes in, and to which level of study, depends on what you choose and what grades you achieve...

If for any reason a you don't quite achieve the grades for the course/s you were hoping for we will always discuss each student's individual circumstances with you and will always offer you an alternative programme/course of study. No matter what: that chair remains!

Support Services:

I know that for many people, lockdown is starting to hurt in different ways. If you are particularly struggling and need support and advice, then the Citizen's Advice Bureau have a link on their page to Refer Net. This is a service which enables the public to make referrals to professional services for support. Just visit the Lancashire Citizens' Advice website.

A lot of providers such as *Child Action North West* (CANW) are not getting the referrals through that they would normally have as most of them come from schools. We are still able to make referrals for your child if you feel that you are struggling and would like support for the family, then please contact your child's Head of House.

For young people with autism or learning difficulties, lockdown has provided them with an

The screenshot shows a webpage from Citizens Advice Lancashire. At the top left is the logo for 'citizens advice Lancashire'. Below the logo, the text reads 'Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancashire, Wyre & Blackburn with Darwen'. The main heading is 'Covid-19 Lockdown: Need Help, Advice or Support?'. The body of the page contains the following text: 'Together, we'll get through this. The coronavirus pandemic has changed life for everyone, but some vulnerable people are among the hardest hit. Citizens Advice Lancashire, in partnership with **Refernet**, are determined to be there during this crisis. Refernet is supported by Chorley BC, South Ribble BC and the Lancashire Care Foundation Trust and ourselves. We will take your referral and find the best advice and support from within all our teams as well as a number of other Third Sector agencies. This will find you the **support and help you need**. Just **follow the link below** to start the process and someone will be in touch as soon as possible. Thank you'. At the bottom, there is a blue button with white text that says 'Self-Isolating? Vulnerable? Alone? Click here to submit a request.'

increased level of challenge in coping. Again, there are services that you can access for support if this relates to your family circumstances through the People First service. This is a new service which has been created in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

VE Day Bank Holiday

We will have some activities that we will send to you to celebrate VE day and a PowerPoint that you can share together. This will come out next week.

Our virtual and the real school will be closed on Friday 8th May. Again, we feel that it is important that your child follows routines and patterns as much as possible and also has the chance to take a break from their studies.

Employment Opportunities

We are going to be expanding our team of Teaching Assistants from 1st September. If you know of anyone who would be interested in a role like this, please keep an eye on our website as we will be advertising in the next couple of weeks for two additional Teaching Assistant positions and also a maternity cover for a TA.

That's it for now...

Please keep in touch – we are only at the end of an email and it is easy to arrange a time to call if you would like to speak to us. Let us know of your news – maybe there is something that your family or your child has done that we could add to our Twitter feed. Are you doing Mr Blackburn's daily puzzles? I've only managed a few so far – they make my brain hurt, but they are really good to talk through with the possible solutions.

Take care and stay safe.

Mr Steven Haycocks

HEADTEACHER

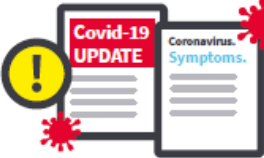
BALSHAW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

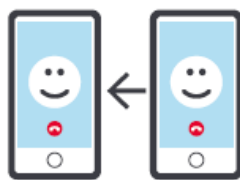
Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)

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Keeping People Connected

A new service for people with learning difficulties and/or autism during Covid-19.


 At People First we are doing our best to support people in need during this difficult time.

 We want to help people stay safe, healthy and not feel alone. We have set up a new specialist telephone service for people who have learning difficulties and/or autism who need some support.

 We will have regular calls with people who need support. We want people to know that we are here to talk to and to offer practical support.

 If you know someone who could benefit from this service please contact us with the name and contact details of the individual in need of support.

Keep connected:
keepconnected@wearepeoplefirst.co.uk
0300 303 0175

Take care. Stay Safe.  [wearepeoplefirst.co.uk](https://www.wearepeoplefirst.co.uk)