

Dear Parents/Carers

It's been another day of announcements and a continuing bleak outlook for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, we keep on getting on with things and keeping them as normal as possible, whilst ensuring that we keep our school family as safe as possible.

Here are a couple of key updates for you:

**GCSE Exams:**

Today the government has announced that following four months of remote learning during lockdown and for many Year 11s across the North of England further periods of isolation due to suspected Covid-19, you can all be relieved that GCSE exams have been delayed by a full... ..three weeks. This also means that the GCSE period continues up to the 2nd July. There is usually a two week contingency period after that in case any examinations have to be cancelled during the exam season. Although I expect that very few of you will have risked booking holidays for the summer of 2021, this is something that you will have to bear in mind as Year 11 will need to be available for possible exams right up to the end of the conventional summer term. Of course, there are three months of winter and plenty of opportunities for policy change before then.

**Road Crossing Patrol:**

Due to staff absence as a result of Covid-19, the Borough Council have no crossing patrol availability this week. Once again, we will be encouraging extra vigilance and road safety awareness in our students.

**Change to the Year 9 School Day after October Half term:**

We keep refining and evaluating aspects of our Covid-safe measures to be more efficient and to make things more safe for your child. One of the pieces of feedback that we have received is that Year 9 lunch is too long, especially as it starts to get colder and wetter. After half term we are going to bring the end of lunch forward by 10 minutes for Year 9 meaning that period 5 starts at 2.00pm and students depart school at 3.00pm.

**Please reinforce Face and Space:**

We have not had to isolate large groups of students yet and we would like to keep it this way. One of the ways that we do this is by knowing which students have had close contact with others by knowing who they sit with and who they may have had contact with at lunchtimes.

To help us to maintain this, there are two messages that I would like you reinforce with your child that will support our safety measures:

- If toilets are engaged, queue outside and enter as a toilet becomes available. Duty staff had to relocate 25 girls crowded into a year group toilet today. If there was a case of Covid in any of those 25, tracing the close contacts would have resulted in most of the girls in Year 9 having to isolate.
- Always wear masks when queuing or if you find yourself in a crowd where social distancing is not taking place (e.g. re-entering the building at the end of a break or a lunch)

**Keep on keeping on:**

It is over the coming weeks that we will really have to dig in. Our resolve and determination to keep going will be tested, but it is more important than ever to maintain standards whatever Covid-fatigue we may feel. I would like to end with some words from Paul's letter to the Romans and a prayer: "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Kind regards  
Mr Steven Haycocks

**Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Amen**

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)