

Dear Parent/Carer

The last couple of days have demanded some strong self-discipline to conduct remote learning in such warm and sunny weather for all of us. Even though these routines are becoming more normal, I'm sure that we all feel like we have to nag our children non-stop and that students struggle with seeing their parents in the role of teacher (even when both their parents are teachers as in my household!). I think that students and parents alike will be glad that we have reached half term and can take a break from doing school work each day.

I have been impressed by the quality of work submitted and engagement from many students (see the end of this update). We still have concerns about a very small group of students and parents who, despite a significant amount of time and encouragement from staff, are not engaging with the content that is being carefully put together to support their progress. More and more new learning will be taking place online, not just this term, but probably into the new school year. Remote learning is not going to suddenly end so there is no option to wait or think about 'catching up when we get back.'

Although there is a lot of discussion about whether and how primary schools are going to return, the picture remains different for the secondary sector which will not be expanding its opening from 1st June. Today ASCL (which is not a union, but an advisory professional association for school and college leaders who liaise with the government) have released this statement:

*We sense some changes in government thinking. The absence again of any secondary guidance on what is expected regarding Years 10 and 12 'face-to-face' experience was discussed by our Executive Committee today. Further discussion with the Department for Education this afternoon leads us to advise you to rule out any students in those year groups returning immediately after half-term. Bear in mind that this is an issue of public health – wanting to ensure that groups of students are not mixing widely in the community. Great caution is therefore necessary, and we would recommend waiting until after half-term to see what the government has finally proposed, and then we will respond. There's some feeling that the return by any but a small handful of secondary students may now look unlikely during the summer term.*

We know that students have felt that they are still connected to Balshaw's with the regular communication and updates which they get, however, they miss the personalities of their teachers and the fun of learning live. Given that it is unlikely that even in the new school year that all of the school will be in at any one time, we have been busy trialling and exploring ways that we can harness our technology whilst ensuring that safeguarding concerns and issues with the online environment have been fully thought through.

We are conducting a trial TeamsLive lesson in our Microsoft environment led by Mr Blackburn on Friday as part of this process and we hope to be able to supplement the learning experience of your children more richly with input from our teaching staff as we move forward. We do have a plan to meet with all Year 10 students and their parents on a one-to-one basis (either in school or using video conferencing) that is ready to go at such point as it is advisable to do so.

In the meantime, I hope that sun will continue to shine over the half term. We expect to see you all logging back in on the morning of Monday 1st June as remote learning gets underway again.

Best wishes,

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)