

8th January 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Since I last wrote to you, we find ourselves nationally in a very different situation. As you will know, schools are now closed to all pupils with the exception of vulnerable children and the children of key workers until at least February half term.

Online learning

Whilst this is a situation everyone wanted to avoid, we are much further forward now in our ability to provide online learning than we were back in March when the first lockdown began. As I set out for you last week, our school online learning offer now integrates a large number of 'live' lessons for all year groups so pupils can have direct contact with their teachers online. These 'live' lessons will not be full hour-long teaching blocks but will range from short introductions to some independent work, to longer explanations with worked examples done live by the teacher leading to independent practice activities or other tasks. Teachers will plan the most effective way of using this time based on their knowledge of the curriculum and pupil progress. These 'live' lessons will be supplemented with independent work delivered via our ClassCharts facility which children are familiar with from their homework and previous lockdown provision. If you require support with any of this, please see our support information on the 'Home learning' section of our website <https://www.lancasterhigh.lancs.sch.uk/home-learning>.

Teaching online via Microsoft Teams is a new experience for many staff and as such provides a new range of challenges to overcome. I have been delighted with the levels of engagement that we have experienced during this first few days and staff have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of pupils to get involved. I would be grateful if you would let us know of your experiences, both positive and negative, informally now via email or more formally later in the term when we send out some online questionnaires. As I know you will appreciate, there is a steep learning curve involved in delivering our curriculum offer in this way and I would like to thank you for your patience and support whilst we work to constantly improve our delivery. You can support us by ensuring that your child:

- Is ready to learn and log in at the right time according to the timetable on our website for their year group
- Joins the lesson with the microphone muted and stays muted unless they need to speak to the teacher. If they need to comment directly, they should do so in an appropriate manner.
- Only uses the chat facility for appropriate communication with the teacher. The chat comments are saved and can be accessed at a later date if inappropriate usage occurs. This is not a space for informal communication with friends and we are phoning parents in the rare cases where this situation arises to notify them. Misuse may result in removal from that lesson or, if persistent, in removal of a pupil's privileges to attend the 'live' lessons.

Principal: Dr N Walmsley



Emotional well-being

We have all learned a lot about keeping ourselves well during the periods of inevitable quiet and isolation that lockdown can bring. It is really important for our young people that they remain engaged with their schoolwork during this time. Beyond helping their academic progress, it will give them a sense of purpose and also ensure there is some structure to their days. There is the added advantage with our 'live' lessons of hearing their friends and sharing in a collective activity with their peers. I know that home learning can be extremely challenging for a number of reasons, but please do all you can to support your child in getting set up for their day and sticking to their timetable. They should be encouraged to take breaks and engage in some physical activity also. If your child becomes anxious or stressed about not accessing the work or feeling overwhelmed, please reassure them and contact school as we will always support to get things back on track. We have some advice and support available on our website.

<https://www.lancasterhigh.lancs.sch.uk/safeguarding>

Free School Meals

In his speech to the House of Commons on Wednesday, Gavin Williamson confirmed that the national voucher scheme would be re-established to provide for children who are at home and qualify for free school meals. We will be in touch as soon as we have any further information, but if you need support in the meantime please contact main school reception on 01524 32636.

GCSE exams 2021

Also in his speech, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed that GCSE exams in summer 2021 will be cancelled and some form of teacher assessment would be used to determine grades for Year 11 pupils. We have no further details on this yet but will update you as soon as possible. Can I emphasise the importance of Year 11 pupils remaining engaged with their online learning so that they are providing as much evidence as possible to their teachers with regards to their progress? It is important for all our pupils, not just for their academic future but also for their well-being and mindset.

Finally, thank you for your ongoing support during these extremely challenging circumstances. I will be in contact as and when there are future updates from government. However, if you have any questions or require any support at any point, please do not hesitate to get in touch with school.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Nick Walmsley
Principal

