



GARSTANG COMMUNITY ACADEMY

Bowgreave · Garstang · Lancashire · PR3 1YE · Tel: 01995 603226 · Email:
info@garstangcommunityacademy.com

28th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As you almost certainly heard yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that they hope it will be 'safe to commence the reopening of schools from Monday 8th March' – we will, I believe, know more on Monday 22nd February, but for now, we steel ourselves for a few more weeks as we are, in the knowledge that you guys are doing fabulously well and our children will, I believe, be comparatively ahead of the game once normality resumes, as a result of everyone's hard work.

A huge thank you to the hundreds of you who took part in our **Remote Learning survey**, the results of which you can view as a PDF in the Remote Learning area of the School Website. The survey was overwhelmingly positive, which is great for us to know, however, I thought I would comment directly on a few things:

- If your child is struggling to access or submit work for any reason, please get in touch with us via slt@garstangcommunityacademy.com and let us try to help.
- If you are struggling with your technology, also let us know. We have already supported an extraordinary number of families with their hardware requirements and internet capacity. The wonderful people at the Garstang Volunteer Force have also been in touch, and have some hardware (laptops etc) which they would love to donate to children to aid their Remote Learning – they can be found on Facebook or, let us know, and we will put you in touch with them.
- If your child is struggling to meet the 4.00pm deadline either as a one-off or over a more sustained period of time, please let us know, and we can suspend the nightly communication for an agreed period.
- If your child is poorly, please let us know as you would do normally.
- If your child has finished their work and needs more, do encourage them to look at the links previously shared. However, we will endeavour to put more explicit 'Extension Tasks' on the Synergy plans to make this more accessible and pertinent.

Remote Learning engagement has been really great again this week – well done everyone (GCA staff, parents and children – it's a collective effort which allows this to happen and, as I've said above, ensures that our children are in a comparatively strong educational position.) However, although work submission is really good, we have noticed a specific drop off in **Year 10** attendance at Live Lessons. As you know, we don't make these compulsory, although the submission of the resulting work remains so, but they are really useful and attendance is really beneficial. So, Year 10 parents, please give children a nudge in this direction at home, thanks.

It is worth noting, that actual set classwork can now be viewed via the parent log in on Synergy, following a request from a number of parents.

Please continue to keep a handle on children's internet/online use – keep checking what sites they are accessing, keep parental controls and web filters at sufficiently high settings and do have a look at the useful resources under our E-safety button on the website. If children, or you, have any concerns, please just contact us through the usual channels, or via the 'Keep Me Safe' button on the website.



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Last week's letter was (appropriately) very **Year 11** centric, and I hope that some of you managed to access and respond to the Ofqual consultation. I don't want to labour the point today, but just to repeat some thoughts from last Friday:

- We have an excellent record of exam success as a school - remember, that the last time such things were measured, we were the very best school in the whole of Fylde and Wyre. This is important in the context of overall grade level moderation by exam boards;
- There is a long way to go before Teacher Assessed Grades are generated, lots of work still to do and evidence to collect.
- Although I have concerns about the process, I am not worried about the outcomes. I would be very surprised if the vast, vast majority of students don't receive grades which they, and you, will be happy with in the summer.
- Year 11 engagement is superb – keep it up!

We are still hoping to run a Year 11 Progress Evening before half term if we can, and new software is being procured to make this happen more efficiently – Mr Felvus will be in touch soon, with more information.

At this time of the year, we are usually gearing up to begin our **Year 8** 'Options' process, in readiness for students starting their examination courses in September. The reasons that, as a school, we have maintained a 3 year Key Stage 4 are in order for our children to begin to specialise earlier which, we believe, engenders and maintains a higher level of motivation, as well as allowing students a greater depth of knowledge and understanding by the time examinations are sat in Year 11. Whenever this has been discussed at Academy Council (school governors) meetings, the overwhelming view has been that this is this most appropriate curriculum model for Garstang Community Academy. As a result of this, and a determination to not allow COVID 19 to derail us more than is necessary, it is currently our intention to continue with our plans for current Year 8 students to start their examination courses when they begin Year 9 this September. However, we are very mindful that classroom time has been limited over the last 12 months and, therefore, we aim to move the process as far back in the year as possible, to around mid-May, in order that hopefully, Year 8 students can experience more classroom based learning of academic subjects and mini-carousels of creative and technical subjects once students return to school, prior to their making any choices. If the return to school is delayed even further than we currently expect – i.e. heaven forbid, somewhere deep into the summer term – then we may need to revisit this decision. Additionally, I can assure you that the 3 year Key Stage 4 curriculum will be meticulously planned for each subject that your child will be studying from September, to ensure a successful transition to the examination content, whereby the year 9 curriculum will be reviewed, adapted or, where necessary, rewritten to ensure that students have time to revisit areas where there are identified learning 'gaps', prior to new skills and knowledge being introduced and developed.

Next week is **Children's Mental Health Week**, and we will be promoting this at points during the week, but I thought I'd draw your attention to the website www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk , which has a parents and carers area with some quite nice 'Top Tips'. There will be some 'wellbeing' activities appearing on Synergy lessons during the week and it would be lovely to receive some evidence of these (or other wellbeing activities which children do off their own backs) taking place by emailing photographs etc to wellbeing@garstangcommunityacademy.com .



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As ever, please keep in contact with us and encourage your children to keep engaging, keep submitting, and keep communicating.

We will, as always, get through this together.

Very best wishes, and stay safe

Alasdair Ashcroft
Headteacher