

Friday 12th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

It has been a challenging half term, but you, our parents / carers, our students and our staff have done a magnificent job in the circumstances and, whilst we have missed the buzz of having the students in school, I am very proud of all we have accomplished. As we end for the, well deserved on all fronts, February half term break, I thought I would write to you and give you an update on our plans moving forward with all that we currently know and understand. We had hoped that all our students would be returning to school following February half term but as we now know, it will be 8th March at the earliest, and we await the government's 'road map' due on 22nd February.

For Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 we will be reporting an Attitude to Learning (ATL) grade to parents at Easter based on their engagement with remote learning. With the challenge of completing assessments online and our determination to maximise learning time for these year groups; end of term assessments will be delayed and combined with the end of year exams at the end of the summer term. Staff will continue using classwork and assignments to check for understanding as we progress through the curriculum, be it remotely or in school.

For those in Key Stage 3 (Year 7-9) alongside the end of year subject assessments, students will also complete a GLA progress test in English, Maths and Science which will generate a personal report for each child identifying gaps in knowledge. These will not only be shared with parents, in addition to a subject based Parents' Evening in the Summer term, but also help staff identify and fill any gaps in learning due to lockdown as we progress into the next academic year.

For Year 10 and 12 the end of year assessments will help us judge progress and identify gaps in knowledge and will give students an opportunity to develop their revision skills and get a 'feel' for what the exams will be like next year. It will also give us a baseline of areas we need to cover in intervention and catch-up sessions for these exam groups.

The introduction of Summer school provision has been floated as an idea by the DFE and regardless if this is funded or not by the government, we have already dedicated finance to provide summer school activities. We are currently surveying staff on their availability and will provide further detail on both academic and enrichment opportunities in due course.

For Year 11 & 13 we are putting plans in place to give students the best opportunity to be successful and show what grade they are working at in their final year. Assuming that Year 11 and 13 will return to school either before or immediately after Easter we will provide two opportunities to for students to demonstrate what they have learnt alongside the regular classwork and assessments. The planned Spring term mocks for both these year groups will now be postponed. Instead, in early May some truncated mock tests will take place based on what has actually been covered by subjects at Great Sankey and these will be revisited and reviewed as soon as we return in the weeks leading up to these tests.

Then, anticipating that schools will be provided with some external tests (from OFQUAL), these will be run as late as possible in June to support and help inform the teacher assessed grades which we currently understand will be moderated by exam boards. As soon as we are able, intervention and revision sessions will resume and following the May assessment window Parents' Evenings will be held for both of these year groups.

We know that many parents will have questions about how the final grades for year 11 and 13 students will be awarded. Currently we are awaiting for OFQUAL to announce the procedure and process for awarding results this year and as soon as they are available we will amend our plans accordingly and provide further information to you. What we do urge is that students continue to work hard, attend remote lessons and complete the work set.



We understand that this has been an anxious and concerning time for some students and parents, especially those receiving exam results this year, but please be reassured that we are doing all we can to minimise the disruption to learning for the pupils in our care and also support their mental health. This term has seen the launch of GSHS Well-being Wednesday, which includes activities and resources for students to access via their Form PDR classrooms, alongside signposting to local and national agencies such as Kooth and NSPCC.

As part of our GSHS Well-being Wednesday PDR programme, we will be hosting a Personal Development Day on **Wednesday 24th February**. **There will be no live or pre-recorded lesson materials posted on this day**, as we encourage students to have a no screen day and engage in a range of Personal Development tasks under the following categories: Creative, Physical, Well-being and Community. Students will have further details shared via the PDR classroom on Monday 22nd February and will be expected to upload evidence of their activities by Friday 26th February, where we will then be recognising participation with the GSHS Personal Development Awards.

Whilst the lockdown has been challenging for every child, and adult, as they adapt to new routines, we will continue to support every student with general information on well-being whilst targeting our most vulnerable and those in crisis with specialist support. We have recently appointed Mrs Buchan, (previously Stephenson House Officer) who is a qualified Integrative Therapist, to the position of Mental Health and Well-being Mentor and she will be taking up role after half term and working with targeted students on a 1:1 basis.

The overall response from parents was that our **Virtual form Tutor Parents' Evening** was a success. We had a positive number of sign ups and, asides from a few minor technical glitches, it was great to speak with families and discuss your child's well-being and their engagement with our Remote Education programme. Those families who needed more time received follow up contact from Form Tutors following the meeting and whilst we are planning another similar event for the next half term, if you do have any concerns or queries you wish to discuss, please do contact your child's House Team.

Following the recent announcement of our new partnership with **National Online Safety as a Certified School** (as shared on Twitter last week) if you have yet to download the [National Online Safety app](#) (please click to follow link) I urge you to do so, especially in the current climate where our children are spending more time on devices. The app provides instant access for parents to online safety resources that are comprehensive, up-to-date, and relevant to support your child.

As mentioned in previous communication, we have also invested in a new programme, **'Class Charts'**, to track attendance, behaviour & rewards in school. This system was modified by Mr Masher this half term in response to lockdown to capture engagement with Remote Education and, following successful trial, parental access details will be shared as we return.

While supporting those closest to their exams is a priority we are putting in place the systems, structures and support for other year groups so they can catch up quickly and as seamlessly as possible on their return. With this in mind, we have taken the opportunity to review our behaviour system and how we communicate attitudes to learning with parents. Next half term we will share more details about the plans we have to ensure that we re-establish learning habits to maximise every minute of learning in all lessons and that students are not only ready to learn, but are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Although we hope everyone remains safe and well, if your child develops symptoms over the coming days and receives a **positive Covid-19 test up to and including Wednesday 17th February**, you must inform school via our Covid phone line (Option 1) as we still have to report cases to Public Health.

Whilst we await the confirmation of our students' return, this hopefully gives you a flavour of what we are planning to ensure that we maximise every minute of learning and that you and our students are best supported. I am also pleased to share with you that Warrington Local Authority are using their Winter Covid Grant to provide Free School Meal vouchers for the half term week and those families eligible should receive these directly.

It is important now, however, to say to our children that they can have a break from school work next week and for you, our students and staff to rest and re-charge ready for the next half term. With this in mind, the school site will be closed for the full week and there will be no new work set until the week beginning Monday 22nd February. On behalf of all of our staff, I wish you and your family a safe, healthy and restful February half term break.

Yours faithfully,



Mr John Shannon
Headteacher