

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope this letter finds you and your families safe, well and managing to deal with all the uncertainties that surround us as we move into this new phase of lockdown; we are certainly living in testing times and my thoughts and prayers go out to our families and staff who have been impacted upon by Covid-19 and lost loved ones recently. The strength of solidarity across our school community in response to these challenging times truly personifies **Great in name, Greatest together**.

We have been processing, no doubt like yourselves, the recent Government announcement about the “roadmap” for schools re-opening and secondary schools being asked to put in place some **“face to face support” for Year 10 and Year 12 students in the final half term to support their continued home learning**.

Whilst we have discussed initial plans of what this could look like for Year 10 and Year 12, **we are awaiting further guidance from the Department for Education before finalising any plans on what any return to school would look like and when this would be**. Please be assured, however, in any proposal our **absolute priority is the continued safety & well-being of our students, staff and their families**. Once we have had time to digest the new guidance we will share with you our plans for students to gradually return to school.

We are aware, however, that our **Year 7-9 students will be coming to terms with the news that they will almost certainly not be coming back to school before September**. It is with great sadness that we cannot use our usual ways of wrapping our metaphorical arms around our students, reassure them that everything will be alright and share how they can manage how they may be feeling in troubled times. To address this, we are exploring how we can build on the support information provided on our website and the overwhelmingly well received regular contact from our Pastoral Team through our Welfare Call System and introduce some extended pastoral support, such as virtual assemblies – watch this space!

Having this, albeit limited, clarity around what’s happening for the majority of our students has meant **we are reviewing our Home Study provision to ensure that home learning remains engaging, meaningful and manageable** for students and yourselves as parents. Our amazing staff, whose inspirational efforts continue to raise the bar, are implementing improvements to provision at quite a pace around remote learning and are adapting their online offer to take into account some of the issues you have let us know about in terms of printing, access to devices and additional structure / feedback to your child’s work. We will further update you with these developments as they roll out into the final half term.

As I mentioned to you before Easter, regarding expectations around completion of work and the challenges of home learning, your child’s mental health and wellbeing as we come out of this pandemic will be more important than their academic position. **It is important to strike the right balance so that students stay up to date with their school work, whilst also ensuring that they have enough time in the day to have some down time, to pursue other creative activities and to support family life**. Engaging with the tasks set is the priority as opposed to task completion so if it’s taking too long to finish a piece, or it becomes too negative or challenging, then please reassure your child that it’s OK. What matters is that their brain was having a go at something.

Although we will continue to be open over the May Half Term holidays to provide support for the children of key workers and vulnerable students, it is important that staff, students and families take this time to rest and re-charge their batteries again after a challenging half term. With this in mind, no additional work will be set via Google Classroom during this time.



We continue to update our **'Supporting Parents and Students During School Closure'** section of our website with welfare and well-being information and some parents have already shared concerns with our Pastoral Team which we are supporting. Any concerns which are preventing a student from accessing the work set are shared with subject teachers to ensure that this is taken into consideration and, where appropriate, additional support is offered. ***If you are struggling, however, to get your child to get into good routines and engage with learning then please do let us know and we will do what we can to put in support.***

In response to recent requests, ***we have re-posted our Key Worker information and survey on our school website.*** If you are a key worker and you wish for your child to access provision, please complete the survey and a member of our Safeguarding Team will contact you to discuss your need.

To our students who are at home, you continue to be missed and I hope you are all safe and well. I must tell you, school is an eerily quiet place without your energy, character and vibrant personalities; we look forward to having you back and creating an invigorated, purposeful and supportive learning atmosphere. Whilst school is closed to many, it is still business as usual behind the scenes and there are a number of items I would like you to explore alongside your GSHS work:

**Student Leadership Team:** Our Student Leadership Team drives our Student Voice here at school and we are looking forward to receiving applications from Year 10 students for our coveted Head Boy & Girl and House Captain positions. Further details will be launched on our website and via Google Classroom from Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May.

**Scholars Programme:** We recently launched our online self-nomination form via the Google Classroom and we have already received a fantastic number of entries, although we know we have many more students who engage with our extra-curricular and enrichment programme whose commitment is to be recognised. If you have yet to do so, check the details on our website and get your self-nominations in!

**Year 6 Transition:** To help support our new Year 7 students, and share our sense of community, we would like to create a *"What makes Great Sankey great?"* video with messages from students and staff. Further details will be shared through the Lockdown Challenges section of the Google Classroom from Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May.

As life continues to be different; none of us know what the new normal will be, but, as a school, we will continue to serve the interests of our community as best we can. One example is that of our fantastic DT Department, in particular Mrs Shiel and Mrs Gall, who continue to support our community and have now ***produced over 600 pieces of PPE for frontline workers.*** This, however, is just one example of the amazing acts of citizenship and good deeds taking place in our community.

I stated in my last letter that our students all have the ability to rise to the challenge and asked what they could do positively at home in these testing times. Through our Welfare Call System, I am delighted to have been informed of a number of students going above and beyond to make a positive difference; two Year 7 students baking for their families and housebound neighbours, a Year 11 student mowing the lawn for all of his neighbours, a Year 10 student who has been running socially distanced Zumba classes every morning for her cul-de-sac, a Year 9 student who has walked a marathon in her garden and raised over £450 for St Rocco's Hospice and a number of other students who have been helping out younger siblings at home and supporting key worker parents by making meals for the family. All amazing achievements!

These are just a handful of examples and we want to know of more and celebrate the efforts of our amazing students. To recognise their achievements, we have created the ***'Pride of Great Sankey Awards'*** on our website and we would like you to nominate any student who you feel has made the effort to make a positive difference and is worthy of recognition. We look forward to receiving your nominations and celebrating our students' successes with you all.

I wish you all well and I would like to thank you for your continued support during this challenging time. We are truly appreciative of all of your feedback, through social media or directly to the school, and we will continue to work with you to best support the welfare and progress of your children. We will emerge stronger from this, I am convinced of that!

Please take care, stay safe and, continue to stay ***Great in name, Greatest together.***

Yours sincerely,



Mr Paul Masher  
Deputy Headteacher