



**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020**

**Dear Parents and Carers,**

I thought it was important to write to you as we reach the end of the Spring Term and what would normally be anticipated as the Easter holiday. Clearly things are different in these unprecedented times, so please forgive what will be quite a lengthy email/letter.

I would like to start by again thanking students for the work they have been completing in very unusual circumstances and to thank parents for their continued support and for their messages of encouragement and appreciation. We know that supporting your child to complete school work alongside your other responsibilities, working from home or caring for other children or relatives, is really difficult.

### **Working at home**

We are continuing to use the Student section of the website and Google Classrooms as the main means of communication regarding school work. In addition to IT access at home, we recommend that your child has access to paper, a folder with plastic wallets and dividers, a calculator and pens/pencils for creative work. All this equipment is available very cheaply from supermarkets, so we recommend stocking up during your next essential visit.

Although all home-learning tasks are set online, we are happy for students to complete work on paper. This is especially true for anyone who has technical issues or who has limited access to IT. If your child completes work on paper, we would like them to keep it all safe in a folder until such a time that it can be returned to school. It does not need to be posted to school. Please ask your child to let their teachers know if they are working on paper.

Students in Years 7-9 can use the email contact on the bottom of each subject page to take photos of their work and email teachers if they wish, but this is not a requirement. To clarify: students in Year 7-9 do not have individual Google Classrooms set up by teachers; this is for Year 10-13 only. Years 7-9 do not have to upload work to Google Classroom accounts.

<https://longbenton.org.uk/students>

### **Easter Break**

We have uploaded the next round of work for Y7-9 which is clearly dated on each year group page in the Student section of the website. However, during the Easter break, teachers will not be setting work for students as they have been for the past fortnight. This will give students a rest and, if needed, a chance to catch up on any work they have yet to complete.

### **Free School Meals (FSM)**

Throughout our closure we have worked alongside the Local Authority Catering Services Team who have been preparing packed lunches for FSM students which have been available for collection each day. You may have seen in the press the government have released details of a national FSM voucher scheme. We have already acted prior to this to put something in place whereby parents of FSM pupils will be able to collect gift cards from Monday to be spent in Aldi. I will send a separate message to those parents about how they can get these later today. In the meantime, we are aiming to continue to have packed lunches available to be collected from the school during the Easter break to be collected



between 11 am and 12 noon. This will be available every day except Easter Monday (13<sup>th</sup> April).

### **Contacting the School**

Throughout the closure period, including during the Easter holiday, it is still possible to contact the school. For pastoral issues all Year Leaders can be contacted directly through Google Classroom; your child can login using their school account. Alternatively email us at [lhs@longbenton.org.uk](mailto:lhs@longbenton.org.uk) or ring us as normal on 0191 218 9500. Any voicemails left on this number are distributed to key staff so that the right person can ring you back to help.

Please be conscious that the next two weeks are a school holiday period and contact will be much more limited than usual; we are trying to give teachers and support staff a block of time off on the staffing rota.

Please also be patient with teachers who are currently managing a high volume of emails. We would expect teachers to respond to emails within two working days and to stop checking their emails after 3.30pm each day. This is because many of our teachers are home-schooling their own children or supporting and caring for relatives, as well as remotely doing their job as a teachers. As I'm sure you understand, the welfare and well-being of our staff is really important to us.

Please keep checking our Twitter and Facebook pages; we are trying to keep in touch with our school community through social media too.

### **GCSE and A Level Predicted Grades**

As I write this we still await any government or exam board guidance on what the processes are going to be for the issuing of exam grades to students. The whole process should be about ensuring that students receive reasonable grades so that their own lives are as unaffected as possible. I would expect that the national picture for teacher-assessed grades will be broadly similar to that which would have occurred if the students concerned had actually taken their exams.

As we do every year, we have already done a great deal of work on predicted grades and I would like to reassure students and parents we will do this fairly, based on all the information we have about students throughout the two years of their GCSE and A Level studies. We have students' best interests at heart and predicted grades will represent a fair picture of progress. Regarding GCSE predicted grades, the Department for Education have stated that, once these predicted grades are submitted by schools, the exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data. This means that students' final grades will not just be based on our predictions. They are also likely to use prior attainment data and typical national results to produce a calculated grade for each student. I have no doubt that there will be much in the media about this in the coming days.

### **Students who are considering joining our NE12 Sixth Form**

We have already set up a system where Year 11 students can access and complete some transition work in each of the subjects they are considering studying at A Level. This will allow students to get a head start on their studies and help prepare students for initial lessons in Year 12. It will also allow students who are undecided about which A Level subjects to take to do work in all of the subjects they are considering, in order to help them



make their final choices. If students are still undecided about their future option and our NE12 Sixth Form is a possibility they should do this work.

This bridging work can be accessed here: <https://www.longbenton.org.uk/students/ks4-home-learning-resources-y10-11/ne12-sixth-form-bridging-activities>

Mr Williams has spoken to some Y11 pupils this week and will ring anyone who is undecided and wants to discuss matters with him. Just contact the school and he will get back in touch.

### **Year 11 students who are considering joining other providers**

For students considering joining colleges/apprenticeship providers etc. it would be in their interests to contact the provider to see if they are wanting students to do anything in preparation for next academic year or indeed if places are still available in the current climate.

### **Year 13 Progression**

Year 13 students will understandably be concerned about their progression route after grades are released. We will provide all of our usual advice and guidance once students have received their results, hopefully face to face.

### **Keeping your Child Safe Online**

Many pupils are now spending a lot of time working online at home. The Government have updated information for parents and carers to include a section on keeping children safe online during these unprecedented times. It provides links to online resources that will help support parents and carers in keeping their children safe online.

Full details can be found in section 6.3 of the guidance for parents and carers on the closure of educational settings and are copied below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

### **Children and Young People's Services during COVID-19**

We are here to support you and your child. If you have a welfare, safeguarding or mental health concern about yourself, your child or any other Longbenton High School child or family, please email us. Now more than ever, we need to look out for one another and be supportive. If you feel that your child would benefit from a welfare telephone call from one of our pastoral team once a week, please email us too.

Below are some useful links and online support services you can access during this time.

**0-19 Public Health Service: CHAT Health** The Chat Health texting service, with school nurses, is available for young people aged 11-19, for confidential advice.

**Contact Details:** Available Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm: 07507332532

**Kooth : Online counselling and emotional wellbeing support** An award winning online counselling service helping those aged between 11-25 years old with any difficulties or concerns they may have. Kooth.com provides an anonymous and confidential service using



a mix of BCAP qualified counselling, support and advice on a drop in, out of hours and structured sessions at [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Unless there are significant developments that affect students at Longbenton High School prior to the end of the Easter holiday I will write to you again after the Easter break. I would like to finish by thanking you for the large number of positive messages you have sent to our staff during these unprecedented times. I would like to wish you all well and I hope you manage to have some rest and enjoyment during the Easter break even in these difficult times.

Paul Quinn

Headteacher