



# LONGBENTON HIGH SCHOOL

4<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. I would like to just provide you with some updates and outline end of term arrangements.

## **Covid update**

As you will be aware, the impact of Covid cases on our school continues to fluctuate, as it does in the local community. We are just at a stage where students are returning from self-isolation in Years 7, 9 and 11 and have no further cases to report. Can I make a plea in forthcoming weeks to all families to ensure that children are not sent to school with Covid symptoms or if anyone in the household is displaying symptoms or waiting for test results. This is to ensure that we minimise the risk to the wider school community as much as possible in the run up to Christmas and ensure that no one is in a position where they have to self-isolate over the holiday period.

That said, if you do find yourself in a situation where your child tests positive in the first half of the holidays, we would like to ask that you inform school as soon as you can via this email address:

[LHSCovidReporting@longbenton.org.uk](mailto:LHSCovidReporting@longbenton.org.uk) or directly to myself at [kho@longbenton.org.uk](mailto:kho@longbenton.org.uk) so that we can initiate track and trace protocols and identify any close contacts. I would rather not place my senior staff in a situation where they are having to work in the holidays, but feel it is our responsibility to the whole school community to ensure that we share any such information, should we receive it. We will need to know the following information if you do need to get in touch:

- Date of first symptoms (we will need to look at where your child was in school in the 48 hours prior to symptoms starting)
- Date of test
- Date of positive test result

Obviously, if your child's symptoms start on or after Monday 21<sup>st</sup>, there will be no need to let school know until term starts again in January, as they will not have been in school for the 48 hours prior to this point.

## **FSM update (Christmas holidays)**

The DfE published updated guidance for schools last week, including reference to the Winter Grant and free school meals. This stated that it is now the responsibility of the local authority to provide food for children who need it over the holidays and that from December 2020, councils will be provided with the funds, not schools: (*"Local councils understand which groups need support, and are best placed to ensure appropriate holiday support is provided – which is why they will distribute the funds, rather than schools..."*) As yet, we have no clear details from North Tyneside regarding how this will work, but I will keep you updated when I know more.

## **Exams 2021**

Parents of children in exam year groups will have seen the recent news regarding plans for exams in 2021. The Scottish and Welsh devolved assemblies have announced their intention to move to centre-assessed grades, but Ofqual in England and the DfE are still sticking to the model that exams will go ahead as normal in 2021. The suggestion that students from the North East (and other parts of the North where Covid has been more prevalent) will be on a level playing field with the rest of the country does seem ludicrous to maintain, but we are of course



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committed to supporting students in their preparations for exams nonetheless. The main points from the DfE's latest announcement yesterday (you can read the full press release [here](#)) are:

- more generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged;
- students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision (we are not sure about this yet, but it is rumoured that this will be released in January);
- exam aids - like formula sheets - provided in some exams giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise;
- additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation.

It is also worth reminding parents that the exam season will start later than usual in summer 2021 and consequently, the dates of results days in August have changed:

- A level results day: Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021
- GCSE results day: Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021 (6<sup>th</sup> form enrolment this year will be on the same date)

## **Parents Evenings and progress updates**

Many of you have rightly asked about parents' evenings and open evening events in school to discuss student progress/futures. As you can appreciate, we would have hoped to have held some face to face events by now, but it is looking increasingly unlikely that this will happen until spring/summer at the earliest. We are currently collecting data on student progress from teachers and should be in a position to share plans for remote parents' evenings/phone calls to update you about how your child is doing in the new year.

## **Year 12 and 13 Mock Exams - January**

A reminder that Year 12 and 13 students will be sitting a mock exam series week beginning 11<sup>th</sup> January. Year 13 have been working very effectively with feedback from the October mock exams to implement in this next round of assessments. We will be able to share feedback on progress with parents in the new year; more information to follow.

Congratulations also to Joe and Bethan in Year 13 who have been invited to Oxbridge interviews next week: Joe at Pembroke College Oxford to read law; and Bethan at Selwyn College Cambridge to read mathematics. I'm sure you will join me in wishing them the best of luck; it is an amazing achievement to get to this stage in their academic careers.

## **End of term arrangements**

We know that many of you will be concerned about the risk to families and loved ones over Christmas in terms of Covid, so we are making some adjustments in the final week of term to minimise risk as much as we can and to try and avoid a situation where a student or member of staff is forced to self-isolate over the holidays. Therefore, we are suspending 'live' assemblies in the final week of term (these will be recorded instead) and we are changing the way our teaching assistants are deployed so that they can maintain safe social distance from the students they usually work with in the classroom. As a result, your child may at times work separately to the rest of the class 1:1



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(socially distanced) with their TA in that final week of term. If you have any concerns regarding this, please get in touch with your child's key worker or the learning support team.

We will continue to teach full curriculum content up to the final day of term in order to ensure we minimise any further curriculum disruption; however:

- Year 12 and 13 lessons held at GSHS on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> and Friday 18<sup>th</sup> will not go ahead; there will be no travel to the GSHS site on those two dates (LHS based lessons will continue).
- Year 11 Students will all attend English and maths after school Keep Up lessons on this forthcoming Monday as usual. But from Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December, the after-school lessons will be optional and for individual students with particular subjects. Appointments can be 'booked' by students with subject staff. Year 11 have worked incredibly hard this term, but many need a rest!
- We will **finish early on the last day of term at the end of period 3, which is 12.15pm**. If you would like your child to stay for lunch, please let us know via your child's tutor or year leader, so that we can inform the kitchen of expectations for catering.
- We return to school on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Our school community have been phenomenal since September, dealing with everything that has been thrown at the education sector this year with huge resilience, positivity and kindness. Students have, on the whole, taken everything in their stride and been a real credit to their families and the school. Thank you as always for your continued support and understanding. My best wishes to all our staff, students and families for a peaceful and relaxing Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

Kelly Holbrook

Headteacher