

Our ref: JFM/JC

14 May 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope you and your children are all keeping well and coping under the current circumstances.

I am sure you have been watching the news coverage over the last few days with interest, trying to find a little clarity in what 'phase 2' will mean for your household. At school we have been discussing the detail of the government's plan and I wanted to share some of my thoughts with you.

Firstly, plans for secondary schools are vague with schools being asked to offer some 'face to face support' for year 10 and 12 students only. Schools are interpreting this statement in a range of different ways, with some taking 'face to face' to mean virtual lessons whilst others are planning to bring back small groups of students.

There is currently no plan for any other year group to return before the summer holidays. The academy remains open to students who are vulnerable and those who are the children of key workers, however most parents or guardians within this group have chosen to keep their children at home. We are aware, as people are told they can return to work, that more of these children may need to come into school and we are prepared to expand our provision to meet the need.

Schools have been given a range of strategies to keep students and staff safe in school. I am confident that the hygiene and our safety measures in school are excellent, however I must be honest and say that, whilst we can adhere to a range of safety measures to mitigate the risk, I cannot guarantee that students will socially distance throughout the entire school day and I have no control over their distancing when travelling to and from school.

Whilst the government state that students in certain year groups can return to school, I must point out that the decision for a child to return lies with the parent or guardian and not the school. Therefore there is no obligation, at this time, for you to send your child back to school even if their year group have returned.

It is our desire to have students in school as soon as it is safe to do so. We will shortly send out a questionnaire to year 10 and 12 parents/guardians asking their opinion on what education should look like next term. To be clear, for safety reasons, we do not intend to bring the year groups back to school full time next term. Instead we intend to follow the governmental guidance that students will have face to face sessions with staff members, to ensure that they are engaging with

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online learning, understand what the school expects them to complete and they have all the tools needed at their disposal to complete the work.

For all other year groups we intend to continue with the work we have set:

- The One Drive materials are being continuously updated by teaching staff and students should be encouraged to engage with the emails from their teachers that offer support and direction.
- The YouTube lessons we have uploaded have been well received, so we intend to extend this area of our offer to the entire curriculum over the next few weeks. These lessons are also beneficial as they do not require computer access and YouTube uses limited data on a mobile or handheld device.
- It is not our intention to set up virtual classrooms for all students as too many of our student body cannot access the equipment needed to engage in these activities. We therefore feel this would create a larger gap between our students when they do return.
- We are currently building new work packs for students without computer access and these will be sent in the post for the beginning of the next term.

Finally, from my personal experience, balancing home schooling with work and our dramatically different personal lives can be difficult. The work we are sending home is designed to give your son or daughter a structure to their day and a sense of purpose, we certainly do not want it to be intimidating. They should complete what they can, ask when they need help and not panic about what they haven't completed or what their friends are doing. During this pandemic we believe our job is to support our community, please do not hesitate to contact the academy if you need support from us.

Yours sincerely



Mr Jamie MacLean
Principal