



22nd January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you and your family are keeping well at this time.

Promoting positive mental health

Our mental health is so important at this time. We appreciate that the COVID-19 situation and the latest lockdown are very challenging for our students and their families. Of course as a school, we often talk about the importance of students completing their school work. It is also important for our students to take part in other activities such as daily exercise, creative skills and time with family.

The following message was posted on Google Classroom Stream earlier this week to support our students if they are feeling in need of support:

Are you finding things hard right now? It's okay not to feel okay, but we want you to feel safe. You do not need to struggle alone; help and support is available **right now** if you need it. If you are 11-18, talk to someone today: 02476 641799 (8am and 8pm) or 0300 200 0011 (overnight). Or download the Stay Alive app www.cwriase.com.

Remember you can also talk to a trusted adult at home or school. If you don't need to talk to someone immediately then message your tutor or teacher on Google Classroom and let them know how you feel or email HLShelp@highamlaneschool.co.uk.

Students currently attending school

As you are aware, we have remained open for a number of vulnerable students and students whose parents/carers are critical workers. These students are following the same timetable and completing the same work as students learning at home, and are being supervised by teaching staff and Learning Support Assistants. It is important that this provision is only used by parents/carers in the aforementioned categories who cannot accommodate their child at home. To enhance health and safety and reduce the possibility of the spread of the virus, it is important to limit the number of students attending school and therefore the number of staff required to supervise them. If your child no longer requires a place at school, please let us know by emailing us at contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk.

Student Progress Evenings

You will be aware that we have moved to virtual Student Progress Evenings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The feedback from staff, students and parents/carers has been extremely positive and attendance to these events has been high. We will continue with virtual Student Progress Evenings, for the remainder of the academic year.

Year 8 Options, Year 8 Student Progress Evening and Year 8 Student Progress Report

The Year 8 Options process will be launched after February half term with a range of support available to help you and your child make their option choices prior to starting their GCSEs and vocational courses in Year 9. We will be writing to Year 8 parents/carers with further details prior to half term.



An important aspect of the Options process is the opportunity to receive the latest update on your son/daughter's progress and to speak to your son/daughter's teachers for the non-core subjects prior to making these option choices. With this in mind, we have taken the decision to delay the next Year 8 Student Progress Report and postpone the Year 8 Student Progress Evening (which was due to take place on Thursday 4 February) until after February half term. Details of the revised dates along with our plans for alternative arrangements for our Options Evening will be sent to parents in due course.

Consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021

Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE) want to hear the views of students who were due to take their exams this summer along with their parents and carers as part of this consultation exercise. We would encourage you to take part in this consultation by visiting the following webpage:- (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021/how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021-html>).

If your son/daughter is taking a vocational qualification in Health and Social Care, Creative i-Media or Sport or Business, there is a separate consultation which can be found here:- (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021>)

Both consultations close on Friday 29th January at 11.45pm.

Tuesday's assembly for Year 11 and Tuesday's Briefing for Year 13 will focus on the proposed changes for GCSEs and A-levels this summer contained within the consultation so please encourage your son/daughter to join their tutor (or in the case of Year 13, Mr Ladha) online at 8.50am on Tuesday.

COVID-19 positive cases

It is important that you continue to keep us informed if your child is booked in for a test and then receives a positive test result. Please use the dedicated email address: positivetest@highamlaneschool.co.uk. Thank you.

Lateral flow testing

As you may have seen from our post on social media, we have set up our own testing centre on site to enable us to administer lateral flow tests to students and staff. We have now started to test students and staff who are working on site. The students who have taken part so far have been superb! We are enormously grateful to the staff who have worked so hard to set this up. As you may have seen from media reports this week, the government has now received new advice from NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England. As a result of this, they have now advised schools to temporarily pause the daily contact testing element of the testing programme, which was in place as an alternative to self-isolation for those who came into contact with positive cases in schools. This means that if we have a student or member of staff testing positive for COVID-19, those identified as close contacts will be asked to self-isolate for up to 10 days. The government has advised that lateral flow testing of staff should continue.



Is your child attending and engaging in lessons?

We appreciate that learning from home brings different types of challenges, but we know that you will want to support your son/daughter as best you can to ensure that s/he doesn't fall behind and stays on track with learning. If your son/daughter falls behind because s/he hasn't attended lessons or completed work that was required, then it makes it difficult to 'catch-up' once your son/daughter returns to school. What can you do to help? A really easy way to help support your son/daughter is to accept the invite to your son/daughter's Google Classroom subject pages. This helps you to see the work that your son/daughter is being set and when s/he is completing it. Many of our parents/carers have informed us of how helpful this is. Attached to this letter is also a help guide which we hope you will find helpful in supporting your child to attend all lessons and engage in learning.

Farewell to two long-serving members of staff

Mrs Diane Pitcher joined Higham Lane School in January 1999. As well as teaching Maths to a very high standard, Mrs Pitcher was a very successful Head of Year for a number of years. In more recent times, Mrs Pitcher has overseen the needs of Looked After Children and students in receipt of the Pupil Premium along with playing a key role in our Safeguarding team. Mrs Pitcher has shown enormous dedication to the students in her care and always wanted the best for them, as has been noted by many parents and carers over the years and by several Ofsted inspection teams. Mrs Pitcher has also skilfully overseen the transition process for students joining Higham Lane from a large number of primary schools, ensuring that each student's needs were carefully planned for and that Year 6 students could visit Higham Lane on transition days in advance of joining us. Mrs Pitcher has been an exceptionally committed and conscientious colleague and we will miss her. We wish her a very happy retirement with her family.

Mrs Pitcher will leave Higham Lane on Thursday, 28th January. Following Mrs Pitcher's departure, Mrs Meacham will oversee Pupil Premium on an acting basis.

Mr David Evans joined Higham Lane in 1992 as a teacher of PE, at which he has excelled. His presence, subject knowledge and high expectations were apparent from the beginning and he was promoted to a range of different roles including Second in PE, Teacher in Charge of Careers and Progress Leader (Head of Year). He was appointed to Assistant Headteacher overseeing Behaviour, Attendance and Safeguarding in 2009 and he has really shone in this role. His presence around the school is highly apparent. I refer to him using a footballing term, as a 'midfield general'. Mr Evans has taken the School's work on safeguarding to another level, where he has developed a real expertise and his training has been praised by staff for its practical quality. Mr Evans' work on attendance, working effectively with Local Authority agencies, has helped to ensure our attendance figures have remained consistently high. He has also overseen adaptations in our Behaviour for Learning Policy, with a move away from fixed term exclusions to internal inclusions and the introduction of the highly-effective Behaviour Intervention Manager, Mrs Nuttall, who has helped students with challenging behaviour to improve through targeted intervention. The exceptional quality of Mr Evans' work was recognised by our 2019 Ofsted inspection, when his areas of responsibility were judged as outstanding.

On a personal level, our staff have all appreciated Mr Evans' resilience, exceptional attendance record and dry sense of humour. We are really going to miss our midfield general, but we are delighted that he can now enjoy a well-deserved retirement with his family. Mr Evans leaves the School at half term.



Higham Lane School

Helping Learners Succeed

Headteacher: Phil Kelly BA MBA NPQH

Mr Emery will take on the role of Acting Behaviour and Attendance Manager from Monday, 25th January. Mr Ireland will take on the role of Acting Progress Leader for Year 7 and Mrs Lynch Will become Acting Progress Leader for Year 8 from this date.

Keeping in touch

Thank you for your many supportive messages at this time, particularly about our remote learning provision. If you need to get in touch, please email us on contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk , clearly indicating who you wish your message to be directed to.

Thank you for your on-going support.

Best wishes,

P.Kelly
Headteacher

(KL-AA) A Message from Mr Kelly - 22 January 2021