



12th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you have had a good week and are keeping safe and well.

It has been another busy week both in school and for students working at home. With the recent announcement from the Government that schools will not reopen until at least Monday 8th March, it is more important than ever for us to continue to work together effectively and we are so grateful for your on-going support.

Students Currently Attending School

I would like to say a huge well done to the students (the children of critical workers and those who are considered to be vulnerable) who are currently attending school, during our partial school closure. We have been so impressed by their behaviour, commitment and focus.

Parent Survey on Remote Learning

Thank you for taking the time to give your feedback on our recent survey about remote learning. The responses were overwhelmingly positive which we have shared with staff. We thank you as parents and carers for encouraging and supporting your child to engage fully with remote lessons through Zoom and Google Classroom. We continue to be really impressed with the outstanding learning attitudes from your children as they show independence, commitment and resilience with their learning, and teachers regularly comment on the excellent quality of work that is being uploaded to Google Classroom.

One aspect of remote learning that we have asked teachers to look at is the organisation of the Google Classroom pages - ensuring that links to Zoom lessons are posted at the top of the stream and naming each class so that students can find the Google Classroom for that particular subject more easily. We continue to appreciate any feedback that will help to make learning at home more manageable for students during this time.

Laptop Support

The School has actively responded to the Government's initiative to loan laptops to any student who does not have one during the lockdown, with record numbers of laptops being made available to those parents/carers who responded to our offer.

Recently, we were absolutely overwhelmed to receive a donation from one of our parents of 4 Hewlett Packard laptops from her business. We were humbled to receive such a generous gift for our students. If you would like to donate a laptop to the School, please do kindly get in touch.

Supporting Our Mental Health

Our mental health is so important, particularly during the lockdown and all the restrictions it brings.

The following message was posted on Google Classroom Stream recently to assist 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.cwrise.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

Time to Rest and Re-Charge!

We would like to recognise how hard our students have worked during this first half of the spring term. Half term is an important opportunity to rest and re-charge. It is particularly important to ensure a break from 'screen time' which is inevitably intense during remote learning, where students and staff are having to spend a significant amount of time in front of a computer screen – and often in one position. I know that students and families will also enjoy some quality time together during half term, even with the limitations of the lockdown, for example taking daily walks and doing other forms of exercise. Half term is also a real opportunity for students to practise creative skills we don't always have time for such as cooking, baking, art, craft and to read for pleasure or watch a great TV programme or films together with family members!

Creative Skills Apparent!

It has been lovely to see so many creative responses from students in a range of subjects. For example, over the past two weeks, nearly 30 of our best Year 8 Food students have been competing to produce a 'meringue showstopper' in the Lockdown Meringue Challenge. The outcomes have been so amazing and of such a high standard that choosing a winner has been very challenging according to our Design and Technology Department judges!

Lateral Flow Testing

As I mentioned some weeks ago, lateral flow testing is now up and running in school for the staff and the students currently attending school. It is a very straight-forward process and so far we have had no positive cases, which is encouraging. We will update you further, before the wider reopening of the School. I would like to thank my colleagues who have played such a lead role in setting up the testing, particularly Mr Elliott, Mr Cook, Mrs Smith and our Estates Team, as well as all the other staff who have volunteered to administer the tests. It has been a great team effort.

Update on Calendared Events

We have revisited our calendar in the light of the delayed return to school for students. Dates for Student Progress Evenings, Student Progress Reports being sent home and other key events will appear on the weekly bulletin. Clearly we are having to keep our calendar under constant review, subject to when students are due to return to school and any future lockdowns. We will, of course, inform you at the earliest opportunity if any of the published dates need to change.

Year 8 Options Process

Year 8 parents/carers will shortly be receiving a letter from Mr Banks outlining the School's plans for Year 8 students choosing their options. The current Covid-19 restrictions mean that we are having to do things slightly differently this year. However, we are excited about the opportunity that it has brought us to move our options process 'online' and we hope that parents/carers will find the new Year 8 options section of the school website, which is due to be launched after half term, a helpful resource.

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

Thank you to those parents, carers and students who took part in the above consultation which was organised by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofqual. The government has not given a firm date on when schools, colleges and the wider public can expect to be informed of the outcomes. We will, of course, write to parents/carers of Year 11 and Year 13 students as soon as the outcomes are made public and we receive further guidance as to what these mean for our students.

Record Applications to Higham Lane Sixth Form!

We are delighted that record numbers of students have applied to join Higham Lane Sixth Form. One of the real pleasures of the past two weeks has been for members of our Senior Leadership Team and Mrs Doyne-Ditmas, our Assistant Head of Sixth Form, to conduct telephone interviews with applicants, both from Higham Lane School and from a large number of schools in the East and West Midlands. It was also a really good opportunity to check-in with the students to see how they are getting on during the lockdown. We have all been so impressed by the students' maturity, resilience and enthusiasm as they prepare for their post-16 studies.

Staff Farewells

In a recent letter, I paid tribute to our Assistant Headteacher, Mr Evans. Today we bid farewell to this fantastic colleague after 28 and-a-half years of stunning service to Higham Lane School. We wish Mr Evans a very happy and active retirement.

We are also saying goodbye to an important member of our Support for Learning Department- Miss Thompson. We thank her for her support for our children and staff and wish her every happiness in the future.

Do you need to get in touch with us?

Please use the contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk email address and indicate who your message should be forwarded to. We have been really grateful to receive further positive feedback about our remote learning provision and other messages about the way the School is managing the current situation during the lockdown. We also appreciate that sometimes you will have feedback on how particular aspects of our work can be improved. Whatever your feedback, we look forward to receiving it.

We wish you a safe and restful half term break. Keep safe.

Best wishes,

P.Kelly

Headteacher