



15 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

A Message from Mr Kelly

I hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year with your family and I wish you a happy and healthy 2021.

We were expecting Year 13 and Year 11 students to be in school from the start of this term, with other year groups beginning with one week's remote learning. The rapidly-worsening situation nationally regarding COVID-19 perhaps made a complete school closure at the start of this term inevitable (apart from provision on site for vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers). It was slightly surreal holding a Senior Leadership Team meeting over Zoom on New Year's Eve to adjust our planning! Even though the government's announcement was perhaps somewhat unexpected, our very careful and thorough planning over several months meant the School was well-prepared for this situation.

I would like to say a huge well done to the students who are currently attending school. Their maturity and focus have been most impressive!

Remote learning working effectively

I would like to thank you for your support for your child/children as they get to grips with remote learning once again, following their normal timetable each day. We do appreciate that Wi-Fi and connectivity will present issues at times and we have clear systems in place to support your child/children with IT issues where we can. For any technical issues, please email us at ITSupport@highamlaneschool.co.uk.

Staff have worked really hard to further develop their practice and provision on Zoom and Google Classroom since the first lockdown back in March and we are really grateful for the very positive feedback that so many of you have sent to us. These messages are shared with all of our staff and give them a great lift at a challenging time! We are not complacent however and remain committed to continuous improvement.

Is your child attending and engaging with every remote learning lesson?

This is a key question I think. The vast majority of our students are displaying a mature commitment and engaging with learning just as if they do when at school. Where a student does not attend a lesson, we will inform you.

Just a few reminders:

The school timetable is operating as normal. Your son/daughter should use his/her Student Organiser to ensure that s/he is following the timetabled lesson for each period. Each lesson lasts for approximately 50 minutes in order to give students a short break from using a screen after each lesson.

Your son/daughter should log onto the Google Classroom page for each of his/her classes at the start of each timetabled lesson. From here, s/he will either access a Zoom code for the lesson or will complete work set by the teacher on Google Classroom. At all times, your son/daughter will be able to ask the teacher for that particular lesson any questions using



either the 'Stream' facility on Google Classroom or the 'Chat' facility on Zoom, depending on which platform is being used.

The only exception to the usual timetabled day is the form time period which is at the start of every day for twenty minutes. Students do not need to log into the form time period. However, your son/daughter's form tutor will be available via the private message stream option every day from 8.50-9.05 for any general wellbeing questions that your son/daughter may have. Form tutors are also sending regular messages to their form groups to check that everyone is OK and asking each member of the form to respond. Please encourage your child to do so. Our assemblies are starting next week and will be shown every Tuesday morning from 8.50-9.10 am.

Helping to ensure your child/children is engaging with remote learning

Please support the School by checking as best as you can that your child is working effectively at home, particularly if one or more parents or older family members is working from home. If your child can work where you can see them, that is really helpful. I appreciate that will not always be possible. We have received feedback from some parents that their children are becoming distracted during the school day by, for example, playing on their Xbox, when they should be attending lessons and completing the work set by the teacher. It is really important to have clear routines and boundaries in place. Students have plenty of time to enjoy leisure activities after the school day when they have completed their school work. Thanks so much for your support with this.

Excellent behaviour expected at all times

Just as we expect excellent behaviour from our students when the School is open as normal, so we also expect excellent conduct during remote learning and we have explained this clearly to our students. The overwhelming majority of students behave superbly on Zoom. A small number unfortunately let themselves down and adversely affect the learning of other students through inappropriate behaviour. Please kindly talk to your child about their conduct on Zoom and encourage them to behave to a very high standard. As I say, most of our students are meeting this expectation, which is excellent. Thank you.

The implications of students falling behind

Students who do not attend remote lessons, engage with them and complete the work set will fall behind. This will affect their progress and ultimately the grades they achieve, with all the implications this has for securing places on post 16 courses or apprenticeships. We will do everything we can to support your child, but we can't do the work for them. We appreciate that some students find the work set too challenging and we will, of course, seek to support these students further; **we simply ask everyone to attend, engage and do their best.** Year 10 students are likely to complete a full set of GCSE exams next summer, if the rollout of the vaccine is successful and school is fully open. Any Year 10 students who are not currently engaging with remote learning risk achieving low grades.

Year 11 and Year 13- retaining control

Year 11 and Year 13 students should still be working hard and fully engaging with remote learning and their revision. They have everything to play for. We do appreciate that news that this summer's exams will not take place as normal may have been frustrating and disconcerting to many students and perhaps a relief to some others. We are still awaiting the



final details from the Department for Education and Ofqual as to how grades will be determined this summer. All we have been told so far is: GCSE and A Level exams will not

go ahead in summer 2021. Teachers will provide assessment and grading. (The government wish to avoid the use of an algorithm). Training and support of teachers will be provided by the government. Whatever the methodology the government chooses, the key focus remains the same: grades are earned by each student proving their right to a grade by the quality of work they produce. Exam papers taken by students will only be successful through careful preparation, revision and practice. There is also, of course, value in learning for the sake of learning, not just for examinations.

Asymptomatic testing

As you may have heard, schools are now expected to facilitate the testing of students to help support the government's asymptomatic nationwide testing strategy. This will be achieved by using new, quicker COVID 19 tests known as 'lateral flow devices'.

The government has advised us that up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic (ie having no apparent symptoms). By testing students and staff, we will help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school through asymptomatic transmission.

With the national lockdown in place, we are only looking at currently testing the children of critical workers and children classed as vulnerable who are in school at this stage, with their parent's/carer's permission. It is intended that testing will commence the week commencing 18 January. Each child will be tested twice, 3-5 days apart.

In addition, any staff member or student who has come into contact with positive COVID-19 cases in our school can be tested daily for seven days to allow them to remain in school. We will look to test all other students as and when they return following the national lockdown, with their parent's/carer's permission.

I hope that this update from me has been helpful.

If you have any questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant member of staff on contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk.

Thank you once again for your fantastic, on-going support at this time.

Yours sincerely,

P.Kelly
Headteacher

(KL-LL) A Message from Mr Kelly - January 2021