

Dear Parents/Carers,

This week's news of the vaccine rollout coupled with the reduction in Newcastle cases gives us further hope that this could be the start of the end of this pandemic. Last week's data of 171/100,000 in Newcastle is still high compared to the National average of 149/100,000 but it's going in the right direction.

Recently we experienced a spike in cases, particularly in Year 12, which were all linked. We have spoken to Public Health Newcastle extensively about this and provided them with comprehensive information requested. They will continue to monitor our situation very carefully and we will follow their advice. Having contacted other schools in the city, I am aware that several secondary schools in the city have been asked to close year groups. I continue to remind you that if your child or anyone in your household has symptoms please do not send them in to school; many thanks to the vast majority of parents who are doing this.

Exams 2021

No doubt you will have seen this guidance covering a bit of detail for statutory tests and exams: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-measures-to-support-students-ahead-of-next-summertime-exams>

The key points include:

“Building on the three-week delay to exams to free up extra teaching time announced in October, the new measures include:

- *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;*
- *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; and*
- *a new expert group to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country.”*

Preit Chahal Principal

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The above news is welcomed, though I know many will still feel this does not adequately address the local disruption some students have faced. I can assure you we are making our feelings known with relevant bodies. Nevertheless we are preparing students for exams in the rigorous way which has given us so much success over the years. I have no concerns about the work ethic and tenacity of our students and staff and we will support pupils in as many ways as we can over the coming months. As you know, Y11 will be sitting mock exams in January as usual, and we are encouraging students to prepare for these now and over the holidays. In Sixth Form we will be starting silent study after Christmas and revision classes will follow in the lead up to the final exams.

Christmas Rules

With so much guidance out there for the different tiers you may find the link below helpful. You'll be pleased to hear that you can go carol singing, but you'll need to be a confident performer as it will be easy to identify dodgy tuning with 2m social distancing!

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period>

Christmas in School

Next Friday our Sixth Form students have organised a Christmas jumper day to raise funds for Save the Children. This is the first of our Christmas activities and will be for Sixth Form students only. Mr Tate has been leading on organising the virtual Senior Citizens Christmas Party and collecting donations of presents whilst Ms Eastwood and Miss Moran have been collecting for a mammoth food bank drop off! Mr Baxter and Mr Vickers are busy putting together our traditional Christmas assemblies which we all enjoy. These staff, along with many others who are also involved, are doing a fantastic job at giving us all some sense of normality at this time of year.

The end of this term finishes on Friday 18th December at 12:25pm.

Stay warm this weekend and thanks as ever for your amazing support.

Preit Chahal
Principal