

Our Ref: PRC/JYD

12 March 2021

Dear Parents,

It has been a pleasure to welcome our students back to school this week. They deserve a huge amount of praise for the way they have conducted themselves, from the testing programme to their general behaviour in lessons. This year more than ever we have relied on the maturity and selflessness of students in a very fast changing situation; these qualities have been demonstrated in abundance.

Awarding of Grades process-Year 11 and Year 13

In my last update I shared an Infographic with you to give you a broad outline of the Ofqual guidance. Since then, departments have been working on assessment plans which satisfy the current guidance. These plans are being shared with students on an individual subject basis through class teachers, but it comes with the caveat that 'things may change.' I really hope they don't but without the exam board guidance (due to be released just before Easter) I'd rather be open and honest about the situation we are in.

Our current plans include:

- Most subjects will have some form of assessment before Easter which is likely to contribute to the final grade-this is nothing new as students have been expecting a mock process anyway.
- The slight change from the mock process is that most assessments will take place in classrooms rather than larger venues. They will be supervised by teachers to ensure work produced is the students' own.
- Most subjects will then continue to have assessments from Easter to May half term which will also contribute to the final grade. Advanced warning will be given on when these will take place. However, our strong advice is not to wait for dates, but to keep revising now just like you would have been if exams were still taking place this summer.
- Teachers will assess pupils on content covered. However, enough work will need to be covered to allow them to progress to Post 16.

Preit Chahal Principal

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- The school will have internal quality assurance processes to make sure teachers' grades aren't too harsh or lenient.
- Exam boards will also quality assure the school's work. They'll check that internal processes are as fair as possible and might ask to review evidence.

As we embark on this process, I appreciate your support in allowing staff the space to complete this work. As the Head of Ofqual announced this week, parents should not place teachers under pressure or make them feel uncomfortable over grade decisions.

Covid Update

Cases in Newcastle continue to fall with current rates of 70 per 100,000.

Gary Hunter (Team Leader) and his team have tested over 90% of the school and Year 11 and Year 13 have just completed their second test. This is an exceptional effort (approx. 2500 tests) from all involved and one which I hope will ensure the school is even safer. Once students have completed three tests they should be confident enough to do them at home; more details of home testing will be released next week but the clip below will give parents an insight as to what is involved:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>

At the time of writing we have had one positive LFD result in Year 11. Close contacts have been identified and are self-isolating as per Public Health England advice. This is nobody's fault but many thanks to those students who it has affected; we know this can cause anxiety but please be reassured that teaching staff will do all they can to support you. Please get in contact if you need help.

Unfortunately, it is likely that there will be similar disruption in the future. As with last term, we will check students are ok to go home independently, as most would do normally, but we will give them a letter detailing self-isolation rules and return dates.

If you're a member of a household, childcare bubble of a pupil, student or staff of a school or college, you can get a twice-weekly test. All information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

Last day of term-Thursday 1st April

Due to the disrupted start to this term there will be no early finish on this day. The day will finish as usual at 3:30pm.

Reminder of protocols

With the addition of other safety protocols it is easy for us all to become lax with the basics. As a reminder, please do not come to school if you have Covid symptoms. The general message of face, space, hands will be around for a while and it's important students adhere to the measures, wherever possible. I would be really grateful if parents could re-enforce this message with their child.

Covid Posters translation

Newcastle City Council have developed a series of Covid posters in different languages. These are available in the 'Support during Covid' section of our website should any families benefit from them.

Finally...

Hearing the hustle and bustle of classrooms and watching students smiling, laughing and learning has been a pleasure to witness. I know there are likely to be rocky times ahead, with further positive cases and close contact self-isolation. However, we have seen through this that our students have the resilience and determination to deal with it and our staff have the professionalism and expertise to support them.

I hope I can update you less frequently now but will certainly be in touch before Easter. Enjoy the weekend.

Preit Chahal
Principal