

Our Ref: PRC/JYD

23 November 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are all keeping well. I have lots of important things to share so I'll get straight on with it.

### **Exams 2022**

The government is clear that students entering GCSEs, AS or A levels in 2022 should expect to take exams in the summer. In recognition of the fact that students' education has been disrupted by the pandemic, they will be given extra help to a pre-Covid years. These include:

- students taking GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography will not need to cover the usual range of content in the exams
- students taking GCSEs in all other subjects will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to help them focus their revision
- students taking AS and A levels will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to help them focus their revision
- students taking GCSEs in mathematics will be given in their exams copies of formulae they would in other years have to memorise
- students taking GCSE physics and combined science will be given in their exams a sheet covering all the equations they might need to apply in the exams

The advance information for GCSE and AS and A levels will be published no later than 7 February 2022. The government retains the flexibility for advance information to be deployed at other points ahead of 7 February if circumstances require. The government will take account of the level of disruption to students' education being caused by the pandemic if and when it decides that advance information should be published earlier, and will give at least a week's notice of publication.

Whilst the government is firmly committed to exams going ahead in summer 2022 they have contingency plans in place for the unlikely event that exams have to be cancelled again because of the pandemic. If exams have to be cancelled in summer 2022, students' grades will instead be determined by their teachers, using a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) approach

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similar to that used in summer 2021. TAGs are based on teachers' assessment of their students' work.

The school is working through the detail in the Contingency Framework if we were to revert to a TAG process. Whilst we have been through this for the last two years it is more complicated this year as essentially we need to modify our delivery and assessments so they are both suitable for external exam preparation, but also meet the criteria of TAG evidence should it be required.

Where possible, teachers will let students know if an assessment is likely to count towards a TAG, should it be required, for example next week's English mock that all Year 11 students are sitting is very likely to count. Our advice to students in Year 11 and Year 13 remains unchanged- thoroughly prepare and do your very best on all assessments.

All parents and students should read the letter from Dr Jo Saxton (Chief Regulator of Ofqual) in the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-letters-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022/letter-to-students>

## **Vaccination Update**

### **16-17 year olds**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that all healthy 16-17 year olds should be offered a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. The decision is based on a review of the latest evidence and has been accepted by the Government.

The second vaccine dose should be given 12 weeks or more following the first vaccine dose. For those in this age group who have had the COVID-19 infection, the second vaccine dose should be given 12 weeks or more following the first vaccine dose, or 12 weeks following a positive COVID-19 test result – whichever is later. Those 'at risk' will continue to be offered a second dose 8 weeks after their first dose.

16 and 17 year olds will not be vaccinated through the schools programme, but through vaccination centres, community pharmacies and GP led primary care network sites. The national booking service will be available from today (Monday 22 November) for 16 and 17 year olds to book their vaccine.

### **Under 16s**

The team will be returning on 2<sup>nd</sup> December to immunise any student under 16 who has not had their first dose but would like it. If you have already completed a consent form but missed the original date then the Vaccine team will have a record of that. For those who did not consent but now wish to, the form is attached to this update, please complete it and ask your child to return it to Mrs Philbrick in Visitors Reception by the end of the week.

A mop up of the nasal flu vaccine will be done on 15<sup>th</sup> December and a link to the consent form will be published on the website as soon as we receive it.

## **PE Kit**

As part of delivering a broad and balanced curriculum all students in Year 9 - 11 must take part in Core PE. PE provides opportunities for pupils to become physically confident in a way which supports their health and fitness. Opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect.

The PE Department are finding a minority of students are not bringing in kit and accepting a planner comment instead. From Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November any student who does not have kit, with no valid reason, will be given clean kit to borrow. Whilst the cleaning of the kit will be additional workload for the department, we are passionate that all students engage in some physical activity for their own wellbeing. We'd be grateful for your support in encouraging it at home too.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

The police have drawn our attention to some antisocial behaviour in the community and are asking for support from all schools in the area. Although we do not know if it is our students who are involved, we would ask parents to be vigilant and ensure they know where their child is in the dark nights and who they are associating with when not at home. We appreciate this is not an easy task with teenagers but we'd rather you be aware of Police having problems in the community than not.

### **TikTok Challenge**

You will know that a number of disgraceful 'challenges' have been set on this platform. Thankfully, the senior pastoral leads have not raised many concerns as a result of this but I am not naïve enough to think it is not happening here given it's a national problem in schools. Professional associations are working with TikTok but if any unacceptable activity is found as a result of these 'challenges' (or any other) we will involve Police, the Local Authority and students risk permanent exclusion. Derogatory comments about staff will not be tolerated.

Attached to this newsletter is information on what TikTok is and advice to parents/carers.

### **Recent events in school**

Some great things have happened over the last few weeks which make me feel we are regaining some form of normality and community.

Remembrance Assemblies were organised by Mrs Elliott and Mr Vickers virtually for Main School and in person for Year 13. This allowed all staff and students to remember those who have lost their lives in conflict. This also reminded me of how much talent we have with some lovely performances of *You'll Never Walk Alone* and *In Flanders Fields*. Well done to all students involved.

Our rugby students also made it through to the knockout stages of the national ACE competition and we wish them well against Hartpury on Wednesday.

Newcastle North's MP Catherine McKinnell joined Year 10 pupils at Gosforth Academy on Friday (12 November) for a discussion on online safety and abuse. The outreach event forms part of a wider inquiry into tackling online abuse undertaken by Parliament's Petitions Committee, which Catherine chairs. (<https://www.catherinemckinnellmp.co.uk/petitions-committee-inquiry-gosforth-academy/>)

Finally, we hope Review Day was useful for all parents in Year 9 -11. Review days give parents and students a snapshot on how your child is doing in general and a chance to identify some focus areas. These will be followed up by subject specific parents evenings later this year but please do not wait until those if you have any queries/concerns. Alongside review day there was also a hugely successful intervention programme for Year 11 and Year 13 students and a Careers Convention. Having walked through the Convention it certainly seemed a very worthwhile event and I'd like to share a quote from one of the stalls represented:

*I just wanted to thank you for hosting the Careers event yesterday and having TDR training be a part of it. To be honest it's one of the best Academy based events we have attended and all of the Staff and Students were really engaging.*

Here's hoping you have a good week. I'll be back in touch before the end of term.

Preit Chahal  
Principal