

Our Ref PRC/JYD

Date: 10 May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Given the immensely busy time at the moment you will have gathered that my fortnightly updates have changed to ones based on need. Please be aware when there is something worthy of sharing, I will provide an update, but I will not add to your 'to do' list unless I need to.

### Covid

We realise that infection rates around the country have been falling and there does finally seem to be light at the end of the tunnel. However, we all need to continue to be careful and to follow the Government advice. Whilst rates are low, Newcastle rates are still higher than average and many local schools have still suffered disruption.

Please remember the basics:

- Do not send your child into school if they have Covid symptoms (high temperature, new and continuous cough or loss of taste or smell). In this instance you must book a PCR test and not rely on the result of a home LFD test.
- Please continue to test twice weekly.
- Finally, please remind your child about the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, mask wearing (covering mouth and nose), distancing, no car sharing etc.

The students have been brilliant at adapting to Covid measures and the number of cases has severely reduced from the Autumn term; we don't want to trip at the final hurdle due to complacency.

### Awarding of Grades-Summer 2021

Most subjects are embarking on their final assessments over the next few weeks. I would like to thank parents and carers for the crucial role you have played in guiding

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your child through. Students have shown real determination and resilience in an unprecedented time and deserve a huge amount of praise.

I want to make a special mention for the staff as well at this point. The recent developments from the DfE and Ofqual have meant that not only are teachers preparing students for assessments earlier than expected but they are also carrying out the invigilation, marking, standardising and moderating of the assessments. Subject leaders and support staff are carrying out extensive administrative tasks which in any normal year would have been done by exam boards. They too have been remarkable throughout.

Over the next couple of weeks we will be sharing with students what evidence we will be using to arrive at their grade-please be clear, this won't be marks or grades, just simply a list of the assessments we will be using. This won't be a huge surprise as most students already know this information, given we have been preparing them in lessons. Please remember, unless there is an exceptional or mitigating circumstance, the evidence we choose to use is not a topic for negotiation between teacher and student or teacher and parents.

Our Centre Policy for Awarding of Grades in Summer 2021 is available on our website.

### **Study Leave, Enrolment and Results**

Mrs Blackburn (Director of Post 16) and Mrs Milburn (Acting Director of Main School) will be writing a separate letter to our Year 11 and Year 13 students about these items. More detail will be in their letters but the highlights include:

- Year 13 will go on Study Leave on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May and will receive farewell tutorials on this day in smaller groups.
- Year 11 will also go on study leave in this final week but will be required to do some additional activities after May half term. This includes remote activities helping them with the step up to Post 16 for subjects they wish to study at Sixth Form and some general Careers advice. There may be a small minority of students who are called into school to complete practical endorsements for subjects eg Languages or complete assessments that they have been absent for.
- Those students in Year 11 who have expressed an interest to stay on will also be involved in our week long Bridging Course which runs from Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July.
- Mrs Vincent, Progression Manager, will be running a bespoke programme for those who aren't planning to come back to our Sixth Form, with a mixture of in school talks and remote IAG provision.
- A-level Results day is on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August and GCSE results on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Absence**

A reminder that for a known absence you must ring the school Attendance line (0191 2559020) in advance to avoid the attendance team needing to do First Day Absence calling. This is particularly relevant now, as some of our students are celebrating Eid.

## **New Academic Year-May Rollover**

Those of you who are in Year 9 have not experienced the fact that at Gosforth we 'rollover' the timetable at May half term rather than traditionally in September like most schools. We have done this for a number of years now and it gives us gained time in the last half term to start (Year 9), or plough on (Year 10 and Year 12) with content. This is even more important this year given the disruption. So, after May half term our current Year 9, Year 10 and Year 12 will all move up a year, receive new timetables, possibly have new teachers and be referred to as Year 10, Year 11 and Year 13.

## **Return to our new normal**

We are expecting some announcements regarding the lifting of some restrictions in school fairly soon. No doubt this won't be rushed, as Covid is still around and we are likely to release measures in school in a phased way. As a Senior Team we have been spending some time discussing some of the lessons learned from Covid, including some of the routines we will actually look to keep when we return to our 'new normal' to make the school even better than it is.

Finally, we are keen to get the wider life of the school up and running again and I'm delighted to say there has already been some rugby fixtures and a Duke of Edinburgh trip planned. We know how vital extra-curricular experiences are to a well-rounded education and will be looking to re-introduce more of this as time goes on.

I hope you all have a good week.

Preit Chahal  
Principal