

Our Ref : PRC/KJA

1 April 2021

Dear Parents/ Students,

Despite only four weeks of face-to-face teaching, lots has happened in that time and staff and students need a well-earned Easter break. We are hoping for a much less disrupted final term, although recognise that we are still going to be operating under very strict Covid-19 protocols.

Testing

Roughly 5000 tests took place on site over three weeks, so students who consented should now be home testing with confidence, which creates a safer environment for us all. Credit must go to both our testing team for the smooth way this was organised and to the students for their exemplary behaviour. Students should continue to test twice weekly over the Easter holidays and must test on the evening of Sunday 18th April before the return to school.

There is lots of guidance out there and things can be confusing. In a nutshell, LFD home testing is for those without symptoms and PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) testing is for those with symptoms. Relying on the test result of a home LFD if you have symptoms is not enough.

For further information go to:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/public-health-wellbeing-and-leisure/public-health-services/coronavirus-covid-19/school-and>

Contact Tracing-Easter Holidays

If your child has tested positive for Covid-19 and was in school 48 hours prior to symptoms or prior to the date of the positive case (if asymptomatic) you must inform the school immediately via admin@ga.newcastle.sch.uk. We will then have to contact trace and ask other students to isolate. If your child tests positive but was not in school 48 hours prior to the positive test or when symptoms started you do not need to inform school as Test and Trace will do close contact tracing.

Preit Chahal Principal

Hugh Robinson CEO

Knightsbridge, Great North Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2JH

T +44 (0)191 285 1000

E admin@ga.newcastle.sch.uk W www.gosforthacademy.org.uk

Uniform

By and large uniform has been exemplary since students have returned. **We regard the wearing of school uniform as very important and seek the support of parents in maintaining our very high standards in this respect**

We expect students to come to school looking tidy and presentable. Jewellery is restricted to a watch, a single flat ring worn on the finger and one pair of small plain stud earrings worn in separate ear lobes. We reserve the right to confiscate, or insist that students remove, any item which contravenes these guidelines or which we deem to be a potential safety hazard. Hair accessories should be plain black, navy or white and not excessive. Religious headwear must be plain black, navy or white. Personal stereos must not be worn, nor should mobile phones be switched on or visible inside the building. Excessive makeup, false nails and nail varnish are not allowed. Hairstyles must not be extreme, avant-garde or an unnatural colour. We reserve the right to determine what is a reasonable style or colour of hair and to insist that students with inappropriate hairstyles have them restyled or coloured, wear a suitable covering or remain in isolation in school until we consider their hair to be acceptable.

With Covid adaptations the general rule is full school uniform as above or fully logotised PE kit. A handful of students are wearing full school uniform and trainers; this is not permitted.

Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers Events

Given the uncertainty on numbers at large functions we have had to make the decision to cancel the Proms and Leavers assemblies. We recognise that some parents spend a considerable amount of money on outfits therefore wish to inform you earlier rather than later. Mrs Milburn (Main School) and Mrs Blackburn (Sixth Form) are working with their pastoral teams to ensure that celebrations can still take place in a Covid safe way, so we can recognise the superb achievements of our students in these year groups and still give them the farewell they deserve.

Year 11 and Year 13 Determination of Grades-Summer 2021

Since my last update, I am delighted to say students have been working really hard to do their best in all assessments. I have no doubt they will continue to prepare over Easter and in the next half term.

The long awaited JCQ (the Joint Council for Awarding bodies) guidance was released on Friday. The main document is 55 pages long and there are 11 supplementary documents, also with multiple pages. Senior leaders and Heads of Department continue to work through it all and refine plans. Believe it or not, we still await the individual awarding bodies' guidance.

A few things from the latest guidance which you may be interested to know:

- Schools will produce their own approaches to determine grades this summer in line with guidance from Ofqual, DfE and exam boards. Each schools approach will be approved by the JCQ. Neither the schools approach, nor the evidence used, is a topic for negotiation with teachers and parents or students and teachers.
- The evidence which we use to determine the students grade will be shared with students once we are certain what that evidence will be (probably by mid-May).
- The evidence we use will be consistent across a cohort as far as possible to allow for objectivity and fairness.
- Teachers are not allowed to tell students the grade they have submitted to the exam board.
- Grades will be awarded by the exam boards on 10th August (A-level) and 12th August (GCSE)
- An Appeal process will focus on a check of administrative errors or procedural issues. In the event that a student is still unhappy with the outcome, Stage 2 would involve an appeal to the exam board. At that point grades can go up, down or stay the same.

Traditionally, this is a time when students are really gearing up for the forthcoming summer exams and this year should be no different. Although it is often common to feel some apprehension when preparing for final assessments, we do not want the cohort of 2021 to feel any more anxiety than previous years. However, as these are not formal examinations we are able to support students by doing smaller assessments in classrooms. We are also helping them to revise material in lesson time. Please reassure your child that they simply need to do their best in all lessons and prepare thoroughly for any assessments over their final few weeks. Thank you to all those parents who are respecting the process by not subjecting staff to undue pressure or interference.

Year 10 and Year 12

The latest progress assessment data is now live on Insight. These year groups will have more formal assessments after May half term.

Start of term

Next term will begin on Monday 19th April at the usual times.

- Year 11-8:30am
- Year 10-8:50am
- Year 9- 8:40am
- Sixth Form-lessons start Period 1

Finally..

Given that it is just over a year since school closures were first announced can I take the opportunity to thank all of you for your support. It's hard to reflect on everything that has happened this year: opening and 'closing' of schools; key worker provision; reading daily reams of updates; risk assessments; Free School Meal vouchers; remote learning; live lessons; mass testing; contact tracing; cancellation of exams to name just a few. I have been overwhelmed by the resilience, hard work and kindness of our staff and students.

Have a restful Easter break.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Preit Chahal', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Preit Chahal
Principal