

Dear Parents and Carers,

National lockdown

As you will no doubt be aware, we have again entered a period of national lockdown between 5 November and 2 December. Current government instructions to schools are that we should remain open as usual to all year groups, wherever possible. This is certainly our approach at the moment. With the exception of some minor tweaks to the Sixth Form timetable and lunchtime arrangements necessitated by lockdown (communicated separately to parents of Y12 and Y13) all year groups are open and operating exactly as they were before half term.

However, we are conscious that beyond the schools our locality is in lockdown. We therefore ask for your support in impressing upon those students who walk/ cycle to and from school that they must **go straight home at the end of the day** and must not loiter in the community before and after school. Similarly, for those of you who collect younger children, we would be grateful if you could be clear of the area of the school as quickly as you can during the lockdown period. We would also be grateful if all students and members of our school community adhere to social distancing expectations wherever possible.

Face-coverings

Thank you for your support in the introduction of face-coverings in communal areas for Year 7 and above from this week. We have been impressed with the maturity shown by the students and in their good-natured compliance. This has now been announced as a national requirement in schools during lockdown and so we are pleased to have this in place and embedded already.

Contingency plans and scenarios

We thought this would be a good moment to consider a number of possible scenarios and share what our schools might do in those circumstances. This does not mean we think that any of these things will happen, just that we believe it is sensible to consider these possibilities as we move into winter.

Scenario: closure of a bubble due to a positive case in school

This scenario has already happened once in one of our schools last half term. In the case of a pupil or member of staff in a bubble testing positive for Coronavirus, we take advice from the public health advisors and Schools' Emergency Team at Peterborough City Council. We then conduct our own track and trace process, whereby those who have been within close proximity of the person are identified. If your child is identified as a close contact, we contact you to ask you to collect them straight away and they must self-isolate at home for 14 days from their last contact with the infected person.

Thank you to the parents of the bubble we had to send home a few weeks ago at Hampton Gardens School. Your understanding was very much appreciated. Unfortunately, self-isolation is now a feature of our 'new normal' and is likely to remain so for the time being.

Scenario: we are asked to reduce the numbers of students in school at any one time

We are sometimes asked whether we have advance notice of the content of government announcements: we do not. We know no more than you do about what might happen and have to wait for the official announcements. There has been some media speculation that secondary aged students might be asked to attend on a rota basis (i.e. some year groups one week, the other year groups the next week and so on). Currently, this is not government policy, but we understand it is part of the Department for Education's contingency plans for a worsening pandemic. If this were to happen there would be clear communication about when your child would be required to attend school. Later in this letter I give details of what would be provided for remote learning, if some students had to work from home at any point.

Scenario: staffing levels not sufficient to operate a full service

The new Covid secure ways of working require high staffing levels and high levels of pupil supervision at all times. We will therefore be monitoring our staffing levels very carefully. An issue we experienced last half term has been staff members needing to isolate and/ or having to wait for test results to come back. If local levels of the virus were to increase the need for staff to self-isolate, on top of the normal seasonal illness absence/ other absence, we envisage that this could become problematic. Up until this point we have been able to carry on as normal and cover any staff absence. We would hope this would continue to be the case, but wanted to flag that we may be faced with some difficult choices, if we deemed our staffing levels to be potentially unsafe. In that instance, we would have to temporarily close to certain year groups. I can reassure you that this would be a very last resort and that our plan would be for each school to rotate the year groups asked to stay at home, to minimise disruption to education and ensure that the same children/ young people are not repeatedly affected.

The procedure for notifying parents of closure of particular year groups would be similar to a snow closure in that we would parent-mail notification and we would place a notice on the homepage of the school website. Ideally, this is a decision we would wish to make the day before, to give parents advance notice. However, it is possible we might have to act at very short notice if circumstances changed and make this decision early in the morning (i.e. before 7.30am).

Remote learning

The Department for Education has given schools clear instructions that should a class or year group be at home due to the kinds of scenarios considered in this letter, the school now has a responsibility to co-ordinate remote learning from the first day of disruption. Depending upon the length of time students are at home, this may initially take the form of work packs or independent work set on the website or TEAMS. If the disruption were to go on beyond a couple of days, we envisage a range of approaches, which could include the following:

- Work packs and suggestions of active learning activities for our very **youngest primary children**. In addition, a small amount of age-appropriate digital input for our youngest children
- Work packs and some online lessons/ live activities/ access to online packages for our **older primary children**

- **For our secondary students**, a blend of set independent work, some live digital contact with teachers, work set via TEAMS/ the website and access to online packages for specific subjects, including those designed to support the preparation for GCSE, BTEC and A level assessments

Our schools have been surveying parents about access to the internet and electronic devices at home. If this remains an area of concern for you, please contact your child's school and we can see whether we can help or whether alternatives can be put in place.

Like you, we feel we have been on a learning curve in relation to remote learning during 2020. We very much hope that we do not need to deliver education remotely again, but do feel in a better position to offer a blend of appropriate remote learning opportunities than we were six months ago.

Events and extra-curricular

As I mentioned in my letter before half term, the current circumstances mean we are not currently able to hold parents' evenings in person, host events on site or operate our normal range of extra-curricular activities. Given the national situation and the new lockdown it is clear that a number of events we would normally stage in the run up to Christmas cannot happen in the same way this year. However, I am sure that with some creative thought we can ensure that in the final weeks of term we keep the atmosphere in school suitably festive and find ways of sharing that with you (albeit, virtually).

Taking care of each other

Finally, I would like to say that I know this will be an incredibly worrying time for many of you. We are aware of many of our families contending with a host of difficulties at this challenging time. We can reassure you that staff in school are working incredibly hard to make things as safe as they possibly can be and to try to keep school feeling as normal as possible.

Staff are appreciative of your kindnesses and it was lovely to receive your positive emails at the end of last half term. I think it is especially important at the current time that their work is recognised. I hope that our school communities can be a source of mutual kindness and support for all of us in the weeks ahead.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Price'.

Dr Helen Price
Executive Headteacher