

Friday 23rd October, 2020.



Penketh High School

Dear parents and carers,

We reach the end of an extremely challenging half-term for all of us. As you know, the challenges that we face as a nation mean that we have had to adopt significant changes to our school operations and with the news this afternoon that Warrington is to be placed in the “Tier 3” category for restrictions, we are likely to face further challenges and restrictions as we head into the winter months.

Never has it been more important that our school and wider community support each other and those most at risk during what is an incredibly difficult period. We are aware that some of our families have been directly impacted by COVID-19 with family members or friends becoming seriously ill or, in some cases, sadly losing their lives. As a school it's important to us that our families know that you have our full support and will do anything we can do to support you or child during this period. We have a range of support services in school and others available to us through external agencies so please do contact us with any concerns you may have.

We have all been so impressed with our magnificent young people. Their ability to adapt to new routines and what I'm sure they perceive to be strange practices has been incredible. Even more impressive is that they have adapted quickly whilst continuing to demonstrate a commitment to their studies and an understanding of the need to take responsibility for their success. This only further serves to confirm my belief that they are an exceptional group.

Learning scores continue to reaffirm what we see on the ground each day, that our climate for learning is purposeful and that learning is rarely disrupted. There is a clear learning focus in classrooms – as highlighted by Ofsted earlier in the year – and learning scores show that 98.6% of all register marks represent good or outstanding learning in class. Indeed the record for the number learning scores of 1 in a single day has been broken not once but three times this half term, with Year 11 currently holding the record. Pupils should be congratulated for their efforts.

Parents will be aware that we have taken the opportunity to grow into the year, expanding provision where we've been able to do so and where it's been safe to do so. Our canteen has been offering lunch across the half-term, but has this week offered a breakfast service and from Monday 2nd of November will be providing a service for pupils to buy items at break time too. We continue to offer our catering service across two different canteen areas to support protecting the mixing of year group bubbles.

We've also reopened access to the footpath this week, allowing pupils to enter the school in the morning from the rear of the school. A small number of children have found this helpful but the vast majority of our pupils have continued to access the school from the front of the site which has been really useful in terms of our management of entry; so I'd like to pass on my thanks for this.

From Monday 2nd of November, we will also be allowing pupils to exit the site using the footpath. We recognise that as we move to winter the weather is starting to turn and so we feel it's an appropriate time to open this up. Again though, where possible we'd ask that pupils enter and exit the site from the front of school as the footpath is narrow and can promote mixing and pupils being in close proximity. With the recent surge in cases locally we feel minimising the opportunities for transmission and mitigating risk of infection is important.



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THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

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Principal: Mr J Carlin BA(Hons) NPQH





Of course, it has seemed inevitable that our school community would experience cases. I'm pleased to say that we have only seen a small number of cases, but we've been able to respond with swift and robust action as a direct result of careful planning ahead of the year commencing. This has meant that we've been able to limit the number of pupils that this has impacted on. Fortunately we've not been in a position to date where we've had to send home large groups or whole year groups.

This has also been as a result of staff being dogged with new routines and pupils responding well to our requests, understanding the need for the actions we've taken.

Where pupils have had to go home to self-isolate they've been exposed to a remote education offer rooted in the very best research and pedagogy for home learning. In anticipation for disruption to the learning of some pupils this year staff worked hard over the summer thinking about how the curriculum in school could be mirrored for those working at home; allowing them to keep pace with their peers and to continue to work through the sequenced curriculum being delivered in school. Pupils at home are therefore expected to follow their usual daily timetable and complete work set by working through their class booklets and using the instructional videos to support them in their work. Of course, Teams also allows them to interact with staff and seek further support.

Teams has been especially useful in allowing staff to also issue further resources and homework. It also remains a crucial communication tool and ahead of the mock exams in November we know that Year 11 will be continuing their preparations over half-term. We have issued a timetable for Year 11 showing when they can log on to Teams to interact with subject specialists throughout the holiday to support these preparations by seeking advice should they need to.

Can I thank all parents who have sent in kind words and messages of support over the last 7 weeks, in what has been an extremely challenging time at school, these have been helpful in keep staff buoyed and have been greatly appreciated. Can I also take this opportunity to thank all of the staff who have worked tirelessly on behalf of our pupils to not only deliver the curriculum in school but also devise a strong remote curriculum. They themselves have had to adapt to changing work practices to ensure the wellbeing of our community. Finally, I'd like to thank pupils for the mature attitude that they have adopted and their approach to what is a strange and challenging year.

I'd like to wish you and your families all the very best during this very difficult period and look forward to seeing pupils return to school on Monday 2nd of November.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.

Principal.



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