

Tuesday 5th January, 2021.



# Penketh High School

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I'm sure we're all trying to process as much of the information as possible that has been released since the announcement from Boris Johnson last night. Many aspects of the announcement I'm sure came as a surprise, especially since the government's position even as late as Monday morning was that schools would remain open and that exams would be undertaken as planned. There has, of course, been a concern about the increased rates of infection and the new strain of the virus that appears to be up to 70% more transmissible and I'm sure this has prompted the decision to enter another period of lockdown. There are a number of aspects from the announcement last night that impact on school life and I felt it important to run through each of these and our current position in relation to these aspects.

## School closure and remote learning

School will be closed to the majority of pupils, the government have indicated that this will be until February half-term. Staff will be delivering lessons through Teams and pupils should follow their normal school timetable each day accessing the relevant subject Team for that lesson. We have worked extensively over the last 9 months consuming not only the very best evidence around effective remote learning but also adapting our curriculum delivery to allow for a quick transition to remote learning that mirrors in class delivery. This means that staff will be guiding pupils through the normal taught curriculum that they would receive in school, ensuring that we continue to focus on progress. Pupils will be exposed to "live" aspects of lessons and also pre-recorded aspects that they can work through at their own pace to ensure understanding. It is this blended approach that will ensure pupils have the best opportunities to succeed with the work set and this aligns with the current best practice and thinking around remote learning. Staff will be available throughout lessons to support pupils to address queries.

It's important to remember that from time to time some members of staff may not be available and whilst this means they might not be "live" in the lesson, resources will still be available for pupils to work through; though staff will be "present" in the vast majority of lessons that pupils undertake.

We've taken the approach of allowing lessons to be as accessible as possible, so pupils will be able to access the resources and live meetings through Teams on the majority of devices including computers, tablets and mobile phones. If pupils struggle to access Teams or their Office 365 accounts we have set up a dedicated email address for parents to direct queries [remotelearning@penkethhigh.org](mailto:remotelearning@penkethhigh.org).

We will be monitoring the attendance of pupils to subject lessons and general attendance each day. Where we have concerns we'll contact parents to discuss and to establish if there are any issues we can resolve collectively.

There will, of course, be occasions where pupils are not able to engage in home learning, for example they might be unwell. In this case we'd ask parents contact the school following the usual procedures to report illness so that we know not to expect pupils in virtual lessons.



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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





## Key worker and vulnerable pupils

School remains open to the children of key workers and those children who are vulnerable across Year 7 – 11. We have already contacted the parents and guardians of all vulnerable children to discuss their attendance. Prior to Christmas we also asked parents who are key workers to contact [keyworkers@penkethhigh.org](mailto:keyworkers@penkethhigh.org) to identify where their child would require a school place. Thank you to those who have contacted us.

We asked for this information in advance as this has helped us to plan accordingly, ensuring that we have necessary rooms for each year group, access to a computer for each pupil, have provided sufficient catering for each pupil and enabled us to generate registers for staff supervising year group bubbles. It's incredibly important to support our planning that if you do require a place for your child, you contact us and that we forward confirmation before you send your child to school. If it is necessary for your child to attend school because you are a key worker please email [keyworkers@penkethhigh.org](mailto:keyworkers@penkethhigh.org) and you will normally receive a response within 24hrs to arrange a place; so contacting us in good time would be recommended.

The school day will operate as normal, so pupils should arrive at their usual staggered start time assigned for their year group.

## Year 11

We don't have a huge amount of detail at the moment. We've been told that exams will not proceed as planned but that the government will be working alongside Ofqual (who oversee exams) to come up with an alternative method for awarding GCSE grades this year. Whatever the outcome we'll be doing everything in our power to ensure that our young people get the grades that they deserve.

Of course, it's crucial to remember that whilst exams are important, learning is crucial in relation to the wider development of pupils. It's important that they continue to work hard in lessons, following their normal timetable on Teams. This is important for two reasons, firstly the work pupils do over the remainder of the year - both online and when they return to school - will ensure that they are well prepared for college and future success beyond their time at Penketh. It's also vital to remember that we don't know what arrangements for awarding grades will be as yet and we may need to collate evidence of their work to support the awarding of grades; or they might be asked to undertake alternative assessments that they'll need to be prepared for.

At the moment it looks as though BTEC exams scheduled for the end of January will proceed as planned, though we are awaiting further clarification as there has been some suggestion that there might be a change in position on this. Again, as soon as we know for certain we'll communicate this to parents; but Year 11 pupils due to sit a BTEC exam at the end of January should continue to prepare for these.



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As soon as we have any further details we'll relay these to both parents and pupils. In the meantime mock exam results will be released this week, sent to pupil school email addresses. If pupils don't receive a copy or you are unable to view these, for whatever reason, please let Mr Farrar know who will arrange for these to be reissued to you.

## Free School Meals

We can now confirm that we will be in a position to provide vouchers for all pupils eligible for free school meals who are not present in school. We will be providing information around how these are to be issued to individuals.

## Mass Testing

As I'm sure parents are aware, the government had asked schools to set up mass testing centres in school. Following the announcement yesterday it was unclear as to whether or not we should continue with these plans. Following consultation with the DfE this morning we are going to continue with plans to roll out testing for those pupils present in school over the next few weeks. The first round will be undertaken later in the week.

We issued a letter to all parents of vulnerable pupils, those who are key workers and whose children will be attending school and parents of Year 11 pupils with a link to the testing registration form, the consent form and the privacy notice. Thank you to those parents who have completed this process. Unless pupils in Year 11 are in attendance at school over the coming weeks we will be deleting all of the recorded data for Year 11 pupils in line with information management and upon the return of pupils we will ask you to complete the sign up process again.

It's been really pleasing to see pupils engaging in learning across the day and demonstrating a wonderful attitude to their studies, embracing remote learning. I know the announcement that came last night has been difficult for lots of families and it is our intention to do what we can to support pupils through what will be a difficult period. Due to the surprising nature and timing it appears as though some details are still to be decided by the government but we'll ensure that we keep you updated with information as we receive it. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.

Principal.



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