

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.



# Penketh High School

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. We reach the end of another busy half-term and a period that has been challenging for us all.

Obviously we were faced with relatively short notice that we wouldn't be returning after the Christmas break and this posed challenges for schools, who had only a couple of days to adjust to deliver curriculums remotely. I'm so pleased that the work that staff have undertaken since March put us in a strong place to deliver our normal timetable, as pupils follow in school. Staff dedicated time to studying the best practice for remote delivery and in the summer worked on remapping curriculums and developing curriculum resources that would allow us to switch to a remote delivery for individual pupils, groups or in this case during a lockdown. It's this preparatory work and the foresight of staff to recognise that there might be further widespread disruption that has allowed us to deliver the curriculum as planned, regardless of whether pupils have been in school or working at home.

I'd like to thank staff for their hard work and dedication over this period and for their relentless desire to strive for continued improvement in pursuit of the best possible provision for our outstanding young people.

Of course, our pupils should be congratulated too for their own hard work and dedication. We've been incredibly impressed by their levels of engagement and the quality of work produced. We know this is not an easy situation and it'd be easy for pupils to make excuses and not engage, but they haven't. I'm not surprised by this, they rarely step away from a challenge and they have once again demonstrated why they are such an incredible group.

We all continue to be incredibly proud of what they have produced and, as you know, we have wanted to ensure that they receive the recognition that they deserve through issuing them with Going for Gold postcards, nominating them as remote learner of the day, awarding them a place on the weekly praise wall or by celebrating pieces of their work. To date we've issued 1031 Going for Gold postcards since our return in January and this fantastic total only serves to highlight the quality of work and engagement from our pupils.

I'd also like to thank parents and families for your ongoing support during this period. We've really appreciated the overwhelmingly positive comments from parents in the survey that we issued last week. It's so uplifting for staff to hear that their efforts are positively impacting on pupils and your continued support means a great deal to us all.

We recognise that remote learning can be draining and in many ways more tiring for both pupils and staff; we also know that pupils are getting tired as we head into our final week of the half-term. This week we are going to ensure that lessons finish around 5 minutes early to give pupils that break between each period to stretch their legs, make a drink or simply unplug for a few minutes before their next lesson.

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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



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I also wanted to inform you that next Friday afternoon staff will not be present “live” in lessons as they normally would be. They will still be providing pre-recorded lessons for pupils to undertake, but from 1:15pm, they will not be “live”. We will be meeting as a staff to discuss the curriculum considerations following on from this period of lockdown. We want to ensure that if we do return as planned after half-term we have been able to discuss curriculum considerations following what will have been 8 weeks of continual remote delivery. It’s also essential that we are prepared for other curriculum considerations should any aspect of our online provision need to continue after half-term.

At the moment we don’t know what is likely to happen. We do know that the government still aspire for schools to return on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March; but we have no information as to whether or not this will represent a full return, a staggered return or even if we will return at all on this date. We are likely to find out more on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, but we want to ensure that we’re prepared for every eventuality so that we can ensure the very best provision for pupils.

## Year 11 exams

The government have now launched their consultation relating to the process of awarding GCSE grades this year. Whilst we have to await the outcome of the consultation for detailed and finalised plans; there does seem to be a focus on staff being able to reference a portfolio of work and also an assessment undertaken by pupils later in the year to award pupil grades. It’s incredibly important that Year 11 pupils continue to engage in learning as they prepare for the possibility of undertaking assessed pieces of work, or tests, that demonstrate the level at which they’re working to support the awarding of their grades.

We will, of course, notify parents of any further information we receive regarding the process of awarding grades this year.

We want to see pupils back to school as soon as possible. The staff and I are determined to do all we can to support pupils during this difficult period and to ensure that we provide them with the best learning opportunities in the circumstances we face.

I wish you and your family all the very best at this difficult time and hope pupils have a well deserved, restful half-term break.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.

Principal.

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