



## Marden High School

Friday 26th February 2021

Dear All,

Over the past few weeks many of our Year 11 students have been involved in interviews for Post-16 places at a variety of sixth forms and colleges, and we have had some wonderful feedback from colleagues across the region. One Head of Sixth Form in particular commented on the positivity of our Year 11 students. She described them as very articulate, confident, and ready to both answer and pose questions. She said that when asked questions about how they were during these strange times, they all made reference to their learning and the support which they are getting from school. Clearly our students are making an impressive mark in the local area and it is rewarding to hear of the high regard which they have for their school.

As I wrote earlier this week, from Monday 8 March we will be following Government guidance for the testing of students returning to school. The aim of asymptomatic testing is to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19, and you can find more detail on this on the website. Each student will be given a specific time (on the day their year group is coming back) to arrive at school so that they can go straight into our testing site in the auditorium, where they will be tested, before proceeding to their normal timetabled lesson where their teacher will be waiting for them to begin learning. We will be starting with Year 11 on Monday 8 March, then Year 10 on Tuesday, Year 9 on Wednesday, Year 8 on Thursday, and Year 7 on Friday. Senior staff will be outside the reception area to welcome students and direct them. Students who have been attending school during the lockdown can still attend school each day until the rest of their year group returns, when they will rejoin them in their normal classrooms. Further details including specific times and dates for each students' return will be given out next week.

In order to undertake this and subsequent testing we have had to expand our team of testers, and we are very grateful for the fantastic response we have had from parents volunteering for these roles. It is down to this community minded spirit that we will be able to get through this significant quantity of testing as quickly as we can, and to get the children back into school safely and into their learning quickly. Many thanks to all concerned.

Our system of controls will continue to support us all in reducing risk, including ventilating occupied spaces, continuing with enhanced cleaning, and retaining bubbles of students. Over the coming week we will be reminding our whole community to continue to do everything we can to adhere to these measures, because it is vital that they are implemented well and consistently. Our COVID-19 Risk Assessment is now in the process of being reviewed and reminders of procedures and protocols will be available to everyone on the school website. As promised, we have reviewed our student protocol for all students returning to school, and this can now be accessed on our school website. I would reiterate that it is very important for children, as well as parents and carers, to become familiar with these measures so that everyone can enjoy a safe and healthy environment.

Further to the COVID-19 testing we have in place, immunisations for Year 9 will be going ahead on Monday 8th March, and details will be emailed out to parents of those students, which include the reminder that children must be accompanied by a parent or carer when visiting the site for their jab.

This week we have also had important news of the outcomes of the Ofqual consultation on how our Year 11 students are to be assessed in the summer. There was confirmation of the earlier decision to cancel GCSE exams, and further welcome news that students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with students only assessed on what they have been taught. Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a student's course, such as essays or in-class tests. No algorithm will be used. Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments, and so it will be really important for Year 11 students to continue to work hard and show their teachers how much progress they can make, in what is still a considerable amount of learning time.

As we did last year, we will have in place a rigorous system of moderation and standardisation to check the consistency of judgements across teachers to ensure a fair system. Year 11 students and their parents should feel reassured that last year, practically all our students achieved highly and went on to their chosen post-16 option, so as long as a consistent and dedicated work ethic is maintained, I am confident that every one of our Year 11 students this year will be successful.

Next week sees the 10th anniversary of National Careers Week. As ever, we will be supporting this great event, albeit in a slightly different manner this year. North Tyneside Learning Trust are hosting a virtual Careers event on Thursday 4th of March 5pm - 8pm, which is set to be a very informative event for parents and carers as well as students. If you would like to find out more

please visit <https://learnliveuk.com/ntl-t-careers-live-2021/>. The students will receive presentations throughout the week via their Google classroom, and will include links to resources such as how to match your skills and interests with a career, how to write a CV, how to prepare for an interview, as well as links to live webinars and career talks. We would invite you to have a look at the presentations alongside your child as there are links to resources aimed at supporting parents and carers with career education. You can also find links to a range of careers resources on our website under the CEIAG tab.

This week parents, carers, staff and students took part in Marden's first remote Parents' Evening which was a great success. Year 9 parents and carers were able to make five minute appointment slots with subject teachers to discuss their child's progress as well as option choices for next year. The next remote Parents' Evening will be for Year 10 and will take place on Thursday March 25th, with a rescheduled one for Year 11 on 15th April. More details will follow closer to these dates.

This week I spoke to a regular visitor to the school who commented that the attitudes of our students and staff make Marden a 'joyful place to do learning', and this is something I have the privilege of witnessing every day. It reminds me of a beautiful quote that is sometimes attributed to James van der Zee:

"Happiness is a perfume, you can't pour it on someone without getting a few drops on yourself".

Each week we see some of the outcomes of this virtuous circle in the work that students produce, and this week we have a special treat in the form of the video "A Celebration of Work" here on the website. This is a fantastic illustration of the joy and enjoyment that students and staff experience through their learning here, and I'm sure everyone will enjoy it as much as I have.

Thank you for your continued support and take care.



Mr M. Snape  
Head Teacher