



Marden High School

Wednesday 6th May 2020

Dear All,

Over the past week or so the national dialogue has been shifting towards the subject of what happens next, after this current period of lockdown. The government is due to review how far we have come in suppressing the virus over the past three weeks and we have been told they will announce plans on Sunday for how the UK will gradually reopen various areas of employment and other activities. Included in these discussions, of course, has been the question of when schools will open again more fully, and how this can be achieved. This is something, of course, that everyone wants to move towards so that we can once again come together as a community and enjoy learning together, but it is something that can only be achieved under the right circumstances, when it is safe to do so, and when the government's own [five conditions](#) for easing lockdown have been met. We have already over the last two weeks been assessing what would need to be done to partially reopen the school at some future point, and so we have given much thought as to what that might look like, and how that might be achieved safely. I expect the government will make the decision on which students will return to school first, and I think it is important for me to reassure our school community that we will be doing everything we can to ensure that the right hygiene and distancing measures are in place to aid a safe return to school for students and staff when that time arrives. The safety, and mental, emotional and physical well being of students and staff will be paramount in our thinking. I am expecting therefore, for there to be clear national advice and guidance based on scientific evidence to support us in managing this phased return.

What we have been considering and planning so far will obviously be further shaped by government announcements which will come later this week, and once we have seen these national plans I will be able to let everyone know what our next steps will be as a school community. In the meantime, we have produced a FAQs document which people may wish to use as a reference point. We will add to this as developments continue and we get more information.

Whatever this looks like, and whenever it happens, we can be certain that there will be a phased return for our children, and therefore home learning will remain very much a part of their lives for some considerable time to come. So reviewing the type of work we are setting, and how we deliver those lessons to students continues to be an important part of our planning moving forward. We know from the rate of completion and parental contact we have had so far that engagement with work has been broadly positive and so, given challenging circumstances, children's learning continues. However, we want to make sure it is as good as it can be, and it was partly for this reason that we sent out a student survey last week. The results of this were positive, and thank you to all who took part - we had many hundreds of responses. It was good to see that the great majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements:

- I feel I am getting on well
- Even though I am not in school, I feel I am able to ask for support
- Even though I am not in school I know there are staff there for me if I need them

We also noted that the three main issues for students were they:

- Miss their friends and the social aspect of school
- Don't always understand the work which is being asked of them
- Miss having a teacher in front of them

We will be considering how we can help with these issues and we are following this survey up with a virtual conference call with a focus group of Year 10 students, myself and Miss Wallace, in order to gain a more detailed insight into students' views.

Members of the Senior Team and Heads of Year have had some really useful contact with parents, and I for one have very much enjoyed conversations and hearing about how our students are getting on at home. It has been very interesting to hear how independent many of the children are becoming in structuring their own schedules and managing their time, a great skill to learn. We have also heard about the problems people are experiencing, and listened to suggestions for improvements. If any other parents or carers want to contact members of the Senior Team or Heads of Year to discuss any issues or suggestions, please do. As we usually collect parent/carer voice on a regular basis when in school, we will be emailing out a short parent/carer survey to a randomised sample next week. I look forward to seeing the results of that and I will share the headlines from it on this website.

Please note that this Friday is a Bank Holiday, and therefore work will not be sent out to

students on that morning, and there will be no need for students to submit work to staff on that day. Students may wish to use the time to either catch up on work, or go back over work they have been doing recently as revision in order to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. There may also be some activities from Easter that children did not get around to which they would enjoy doing.

As mentioned in the newsletter before Easter, this year the North Tyneside Learning Trust are having a "Virtual Star Awards". There are no specific categories and this will enable as many children to be nominated as possible. Parents, carers, teachers, family and friends can 'Nominate a Star' up until the end of the academic year and the online nomination form can be found [here](#) . Every child or young person nominated will receive a certificate and will be encouraged to upload a picture of themselves with their certificate to twitter using the #NLTVirtualStarAwards2020. If you know of a child or young person who has shown outstanding resilience, adopted a "can do" attitude, demonstrated exceptional acts of being useful and kind, volunteered to help others or has just been amazing then here is an opportunity to recognise them.

Take care and look after each other.



Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher