

YEAR 13 LETTER (27.03.20)

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and your family are well and keeping safe in these challenging times. It seems scarcely believable that less than 10 days ago Year 13 students were busy preparing for their A-Level examinations and we were all looking forward to a key Parent Consultation Evening to help guide them through the final weeks before those examinations started. Now those examinations have been cancelled, their days in school in Year 13 are probably at an end and huge uncertainty exists in all areas of life, not least how and when they will get the results which they have been promised to “enable them to progress to the next stage in their lives”.

As I wrote in my letter to all parents last week, I cannot commend Year 13 students highly enough for the way they dealt with all of the above last week. Despite all the upset and confusion they must have been feeling, they acted with calm maturity, were an example and a support to our younger students and even managed to find appropriate levels of fun and happiness to mark their likely final day in school which put a smile on the face of everyone last Friday, not least staff.

I appreciate that much of the uncertainty that arose last week still remains though and this is the first of what will probably be a weekly communication designed to keep you updated on any developments and also act as a reminder of your continued membership of what is a very special school community, one which continues to show its strength in these unprecedented times.

Summer 2020 A-Level, BTEC, etc Results

At present there has been little detail provided regarding this summer’s results. Please see the following links for the information we have been provided with at present:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced?utm_source=96f31727-1fb9-408b-a7fa-d91d4ceaeb6b&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-update-on-2020-exams>

It appears that we are looking at a system of teacher predicted grades which are then moderated nationally across the country to produce a grade profile similar to other years. They are currently suggesting A-Level results may be released in July, presumably to give students and parents time to consider their next steps once they have been received. We will certainly share further details with parents/carers as soon as we receive them.

Transition Beyond Sixth Form

You may already have been contacted by UCAS or your future preferred destinations regarding this summer’s university and apprenticeship enrolment processes. As you may have read in the national press, in an attempt to provide reassurance, some universities gave unconditional offers to all students when the news broke last week about the cancellation of this year’s A-Level and BTEC examinations. Universities have since however been instructed by the government not to do this. As soon as we have any more details about this year’s admissions procedures we will let you know, but if you have any queries at all at any stage regarding university or apprenticeship applications please do not hesitate to get in touch with us and we will do whatever we can to support you.

Supporting Learning From Home

Teaching staff will continue to set learning activities for Year 13 students to undertake at home using the ShowMyHomework platform. These activities will enable the completion of A-Level course content delivery (which is important for those students going onto study at University for example) and enable students to keep occupied and learning as much as possible (“ticking over” is how I have described it to staff). Although I cannot say this for certain in the absence of definitive national information, **I find it very, very difficult to imagine that learning (even the completion of coursework) undertaken since school ‘closed’ last Friday will form a part of any A-Level generation grade process this summer** - after all, the main reason this summer’s examinations were cancelled was a perceived unfairness around students’ circumstances as the virus outbreak took hold across the country. Hence students should continue to work away at the activities for the reasons given but not allow themselves (or their parents!) to feel under any undue pressure by it as the work will not be ‘mandatory’ or count towards the awarding of any A-Level grades. If, and I think this is highly unlikely to happen, we are asked as a school to set tasks which are to be used as part of the process of awarding grades then we would contact parents and make this very explicit to them.

Please note that teaching staff will continue to set tasks until next Friday 3rd April in the first instance, providing as much support as possible via the ShowMyHomework messaging service and direct e-mail contact where appropriate. Where staff have set ‘project-style’ learning, ie work that lasts for more than one lesson, I have asked them to make that clear on ShowMyHomework so as not to overwhelm with work and I have also suggested that students should save their work electronically, rather than printing it off to cut down on printing costs. Please do let us know if you have any questions at any stage, either by direct contact with the relevant teacher or via Mrs Robinson, Deputy Director of Sixth Form, 6thformadmin@helsbyhigh.org.uk

Student Well-Being

This is not an easy time for anyone at present. Please find attached some guidance we have produced for our students, although I am fairly sure it applies equally well to all adults. Please do let us know if you would like any additional support from our staff team at any stage over the next few weeks.

Staff Changes

The rather abrupt end to our term last week has meant that a couple of colleagues have now taught their last lesson at Helsby ...

Mr Adamson completed his last day with us on Monday. We thank Mr Adamson for his work in the Business, Computing & Economics department this term and for his commitment and professionalism, which was more evident than ever in our most difficult of weeks last week. We wish him well for the future.

This Friday is Mrs Tobin’s last day with us as she begins her Deputy Headteacher role at Abbot’s Lea Special School on Monday. Mrs Tobin has been a student, MFL Teacher, Year Leader and SENDCo at Helsby and hence it is fair to say that her contribution to the school has been immense over the years. In particular in recent years Mrs Tobin has transformed the work and reputation of our SEND department and she is highly-regarded by our partner primary schools and by the Local Authority. I know many parents and students will have personally benefitted from Mrs Tobin’s support and guidance over the last few years and will want to join with me in wishing her all the very best for the future. As a staff we look forward to marking Mrs Tobin’s farewell at some stage in the future and look forward to hearing about how her new exciting role is progressing.

Despite the sadness at Mrs Tobin's departure, I am delighted to let you know that Mrs Jones returns to work from maternity leave on Monday. Mrs Jones will kindly be overseeing the SEND and Transition work of the school until the end of the Summer Term, albeit in the most unusual of circumstances to begin with.

Thank you again for all your support at present. Do let us know if we can help as a school at any stage during this testing period - please do pass on this information and our best wishes to our students, keep safe and look after each other.

Best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher