



7 May 2020

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you are all keeping well and have had a good week. In last week's letter I suggested that I would be writing to you over the forthcoming Bank Holiday Weekend to provide an update following the national review of lockdown restrictions taking place today (Thursday 7th). However we now know that there will be no public announcements following the review until Sunday and hence I am able to write to you ahead of the weekend to outline plans for the next two weeks before the half-term which starts on Friday 22nd May.

It is clear that the potential re-opening of schools is a very complex and emotive issue, with so many varied opinions and much media speculation about when, how, for whom and even which schools may be part of what is likely to be a 'phased' re-opening. At present there is no clear indication and we genuinely do not know what national plans may or may not have been made. If Sunday's announcement brings any clarity then I will share our own plans with you at the earliest opportunity.

It is clear that schools will not be re-opening before the forthcoming half-term break at the very least. Hence we feel it is sensible for now to continue our current ways of working for the next two weeks before half-term and then consider how we move forwards in June once we are clearer over whether and which students may be starting to come back to school. The remainder of this letter is therefore a reminder of some of those arrangements and a couple of updates:

Learning From Home

Thank you once again for all the support that you have provided this week as students continue to do their best to progress their learning via the work we are providing on ShowMyHomework. We will continue to provide learning activities using this platform until Friday 22nd May in the first instance, although we won't provide any for tomorrow, Friday 8th May in recognition that it is a national Bank Holiday. Please do encourage your child to use the messaging service on ShowMyHomework - staff really miss teaching their students and are more than happy to provide whatever support they can, particularly as they are aware of how difficult and frustrating it can be for our students to learn at home in isolation.

We are very proud of all that are students are doing at present and we are using our social media outlets to showcase some of their work, although we are determined to do so sensitively and with the understanding I have described previously that not all students are currently in a position to learn and work as easily as others. Please do continue to let us know though of any of our students' achievements during this time, both in and beyond their schoolwork.

Childcare Provision / Free School Meal Voucher Scheme

We anticipate both our childcare provision and the national Free School Meal voucher scheme continuing at the very least for the next two weeks and probably through the half-term holiday too. Hence we have plans in place for the continuation of both and please do continue to use the contactportal@helsbyhigh.org.uk address for enquiries and further information about either.

Summer 2020 GCSE and A-Level Results

This weekend will be a poignant one for Year 11 and 13 students as in normal times they would have been beginning their GCSE and A-Level examinations on Monday. I am sure that the upset will still be there that they cannot showcase what they can do and all that they have learned in the manner which they worked so hard to prepare for. I am sure the anxiety over their grades will not have diminished either and so we will ensure they are kept fully up-to-date on developments in that regard. The Ofqual consultation on the process of awarding GCSE and A-Level results this summer closed on Wednesday 29th April and to date the finalisation of just one aspect has been announced (that the process for awarding GCSE results will apply to students in other Year 7-10 year groups who were entered for GCSEs this summer, not just to Year 11 students). As soon as Ofqual release finalised details for the Awarding Bodies (the examination boards), who in turn will guide and instruct schools, then we should be able to give more detail on the processes that will be undertaken both in school and on a national level.

Summer 2020 Vocational Qualifications

Many of our Year 11 and 13 students have been undertaking equally important vocational qualifications over the last two years, for example BTECs, Cambridge Nationals and the Certificate in Financial Studies. Because these qualifications are so varied in their different assessment structures, awarding results in these qualifications will be a very complex process and is subject to a separate Ofqual consultation which closes tomorrow, Friday 8th May. Once again we will keep students and parents updated, but please be reassured that results in these qualifications will be provided, probably in a manner not dissimilar to the proposed process for GCSEs and A-Levels. The main detail schools and Colleges currently await is how units which have been previously completed (examinations or coursework) will be added to units which are incomplete due to school closure to generate overall results for the qualifications.

Thank you for all your on-going support as students, parents and members of staff work together as best we can in circumstances that would have been impossible to envisage only 3 months ago. Staff really are appreciative and genuinely impressed by the resilience, dedication and creativity our students have shown in their 'home-learning'. We know it cannot replicate classroom learning and look forward to welcoming back our students at some stage and beginning the process of supporting them in so many ways to get back to where they should be in their secondary education - something staff are already spending a lot of time considering and planning for. In the meantime, I hope students and parents are able to enjoy a well-deserved break over the long weekend despite all the current circumstances and above all continue to stay safe, keep well and look after each other.

Very best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher