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Dear Parent/Carer,

At the end of another week of what is becoming the current 'normal' way of working, once again I cannot thank you enough for all the support and encouragement you are providing as our students continue to work from home during the current lockdown. Even though it might be becoming 'normal', that won't be making it any easier as they continue to miss being with their friends in classrooms. Of course, we learnt this week that won't now happen until Monday 8th March at the earliest and it won't be until the week after half-term (beginning Monday 22nd February) that we will find out any more about how the country's schools may re-open on or after that date.

Remote Learning

I know that many parents find the 'lesson monitor' scores which staff give to individual students at the end of each lesson a useful way of checking on how their child is engaging in lessons. Please find attached some new 'descriptors' for these scores, which we have written to have make them more applicable to our current 'remote' ways of working. Staff will use these from the start of next week onwards and I hope that parents find them a useful way of following their child's progress in their lessons.

Laptops

I am sure parents would want to join me in expressing their gratitude for very thoughtful acts of kindness by local residents who wish to support students who may be struggling with learning at home during this difficult time. Two Helsby residents donated laptops to the school and a Kingsley couple donated £500 for us to purchase new laptops. Please continue to use the contactportal@helsbyhigh.org address to let us know of any difficulties which students are having trying to access their remote learning at home.

Key Worker Provision

Please note that unlike during the first lockdown last spring, when we stayed open during school holidays for the children of key workers, the government have said this week that "schools will close as usual over February half-term and are not expected to remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week".

Free School Meal Vouchers

A reminder to all eligible families that vouchers for the last two weeks (£15 per child per week) should now have been redeemed via the national Free School Voucher scheme, administered by Edenred. We have also ordered vouchers for the next two weeks up to the half-term break and the scheme will then carry on after half-term.

Please note that the scheme will not run over the half-term break, which is covered within the Local Authority's Winter Covid Grant. Eligible parents should go to Cheshire West and Chester's website for further information: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/incidents/coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-get-help/winter-grant-scheme.aspx>

Staff Farewell

Today marks Mrs Hill's final day with us before the start of a very well-deserved retirement from her role of Finance Officer. Mrs Hill has worked in the school for over 4 years and throughout her time at the school she has consistently provided thoughtful and committed support to students, parents and colleagues in lots of different areas of school life. She will be sadly missed and I know that all parents would want to join me in thanking Mrs Hill for her contribution to the school and wishing her a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

These are challenging times for everybody at present and hence please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via any of the usual means if you have any queries, ideas or concerns - or if you think that we may be able to help in any way at any stage. Please pass on to all of our students how proud we are of the way in which they are coping at present. To have to spend part of their childhood isolated at home and not see their friends, engage in many of their hobbies or be able come to school to learn is a very sad situation which none of us as adults ever had to deal with when we were children. Their cheerful resilience though is uplifting and our sympathy for them is what is driving all of us, staff and parents, to want to do the very best to support them, both now and when they eventually return to classrooms.

I hope that our students, and you, have a very pleasant and relaxing weekend.

Best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher