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Dear Parent/Carer,

Congratulations to all of our students (and their parents) on another week's successful 'remote learning'. My colleagues continue to be impressed by the attendance, engagement and commitment of our students during this 'lockdown' period. As a result of the hard work of Helsby students, parents and staff I am confident that some of the increasingly-dramatic language being used to describe the impact of the current 'closure' of schools on the education of young people does not necessarily apply to the majority of our students. Please do reassure them of this if they start to worry about things they may read, see or hear in the media.

I am sure you will also have noted this week the increased speculation regarding when and how students will return to classrooms. The week beginning Monday 22nd February, the week immediately after the forthcoming half-term break, is certainly shaping up to be an important one, with announcements promised that week on both the re-opening of schools and plans to award GCSE, A-Level and vocational qualification results this summer.

The School Day

Following feedback from parents on the experience of 'remote learning' at home, we are currently reviewing the timings of our lessons in order to generate some longer breaks for students, particularly at lunchtime. Lessons won't be any shorter, just rearranged in a way that will hopefully make the school day more manageable. Full details of the new times will be included in my letter next week.

GCSE, A-Level and Vocational Qualification Entries

Although there has been no further update on how grades will be awarded this summer, we do know that the eventual certificates will be provided by 'awarding bodies', ie the examination boards. Hence we do still need enter our students for their subjects in the usual way by the mid-February deadline. As part of our checking procedure, we will shortly be sending out to parents of students in Years 11 and 13 the provisional entries we have made. Please do then get in touch if you or your child have any queries at this stage. Please note that we will also share with Year 10 and 12 parents the small number of entries we have made for students who were due to sit vocational examinations this summer.

Year 9 Options

As is normally the case, we have already started to plan our timetable for the 2021-22 academic year. An important part of this planning is the Year 9 options process and although we would prefer to leave this until students have returned to school, unfortunately that wouldn't then give us enough time to plan a timetable which accommodates their choices. Dr Pritchard-Roberts will be writing to parents of Year 9 students next week with further details of the process, which will start after half-term.

We understand that the curriculum experience of Year 9 students this academic year will make choosing their subjects more difficult and we have adapted our usual programme to provide extra support which takes this into account. This includes a virtual Year 9 Options Evening which will take place on Monday 1st March.

Proposed Frodsham to Helsby High School Cycle Path

Cheshire West and Chester have been awarded funding to develop a safer route alongside the A56 which will encourage students living in Frodsham to cycle to and from school. They are currently running a consultation on their proposals to which all parents are invited to respond by the Friday 19th February deadline. Further details, maps and their survey can be found at [Inside Cheshire West and Chester - Home](#)

Staff Farewell

Sadly, we say good-bye to Mr Lalev next week. Although having only been with us as an IT Technician since last July, I know many parents will have been grateful for his support in that time, particularly at the start of this term when we had to switch to remote learning via Microsoft Teams at short notice. Hence I know that you would want to join me in wishing Mr Lalev all the best for the future as he pursues an exciting opportunity offered to him by a previous employer.

With one week to go before the half-term break, I am sure that our students are already looking forward to the break from their remote learning which it will provide. They should be exceptionally proud of how well they have coped so far this term - and of all the new skills they have developed along the way. The resilience, independence and ability to manage themselves and the demands upon them are attributes which will ensure that they have a very successful future ahead of them when this pandemic is finally over. In the meantime, I hope they (and you) have a very pleasant and restful weekend once it arrives.

Best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher