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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope all of our students and their families have had a good week. I just have a couple of updates this week – both on important events that will be taking place over the next few weeks in school ...

### **Year 11 and 13 Students' Final Week in School**

Next week sees the final week in school for our current Year 11 and 13 cohorts.

Year 13 students will 'celebrate' the end of their Sixth Form studies with their tutors in their Form Period lesson on Monday morning and then leave once they have finished their final assessment next week. I hope it goes without saying that we would love to be able to do so much more with them to celebrate the end of their time in school but unfortunately current circumstances and government guidance prevent us from arranging the usual kind of assemblies and celebrations which would take place. We are also very mindful that families may have their own celebrations and events planned for during the half-term break and we do not want to risk the impact that just one positive case would have on those plans if any kind of mass gathering resulted in a large number of students having to self-isolate for 10 days.

As with last year's Year 11 and 13 cohorts (we haven't forgotten them!) we will hold an event in the future to allow students to properly celebrate their time with us. And there is much to celebrate - they are a fabulous group of young people and it will always be a cause of sadness to us that the pandemic prevented them from making the kind of contribution in many areas of school life which I know they would have done. Not only are they talented, they also have a very impressive character and maturity. This has been demonstrated throughout their time in the Sixth Form as they have tackled all the challenges posed by the pandemic with unwavering determination and resilience. They have all completed all of their courses and, if their Sixth Form experience hasn't been all that it should have been, at least we know that they are well-placed to now go on and enjoy and succeed in the next stage of their lives. We look forward to seeing them again on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August and then when circumstances allow after that. I know all parents would want to join me in wishing them all the very best for their futures, wherever they may lie.

Our Year 11 cohort finish their final assessment Period 4 on Thursday and will then have a very low-key event Period 5 on the field – a chance to sit and relax (or play football) with friends in school for what may be the last time. As with Year 13, current guidelines prevent any major celebrations at this stage and we look forward to a moment in time in the future when we can more formally mark their time at Helsby.

We could never pretend that the Key Stage 4 experience for our Year 11 students has been what it should have been and I'm sure deep down parents are as sad as anyone that they haven't been able to enjoy the opportunities that Years 10 and 11 would normally provide. Upset, even anger, would be understandable - and yet we have not seen any of that. Instead we have seen mature, pragmatic students who, dealt with a cruel blow to their childhoods and to their studies, have just looked ahead and 'got on with it'. Their resilience, their determination to make the best of things and their ability to support each other through the many challenges - these are all reasons why their parents should be so very proud of them. We are very proud of them - they will always be a special year group to us and we look forward to continuing to enjoy working with many of them in the Sixth Form. Before then I hope they enjoy a well-deserved summer break and we look forward to seeing them on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August. I know everybody involved with the school would like to wish them all the very best for their futures, wherever and whatever they progress on to next.

**Year 11 Uniform:** Please note that we are always grateful for any donations of unwanted school uniform, particularly ties and blazers. If students/parents would like to hand in such items at the main reception then we will do everything else necessary to enable them to be re-used in the future.

## Changes for after Half-Term

Parents will know that it has been the case throughout the pandemic that schools have been tasked with balancing educational provision with managing the risk of Covid transmission. Both students and parents will be acutely aware of the many ways in which we have (rightly) had to change our usual educational provision since September in order to reduce possible virus transmission in school. However, given the relatively low prevalence of Covid currently, we feel that we can make one significant change to how we operate after half-term. The Indian variant is however just one reason why we need to continue to be cautious about how quickly we might return to what we used to think of as 'normal'.

Students will continue to be taught in 'bubbles' (usually half- or whole-year groups), but will no longer need to operate in 'zones'. We introduced zones in order to try to minimise corridor movement. With two year groups (Years 11 and 13) no longer with us after half-term we feel that we can now give all students access to the full school without significantly increasing overall corridor movement. **Hence from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June all students will move around the school from one subject classroom to the next.** Please note that all other current control measures - split break and lunchtime, one-way systems, use of hand sanitisers, desk-cleaning at the start of lessons, etc - will remain in place and will continue to be as important as ever.

I hope that students and parents are as excited as we are about the longed-for return to using paint in Art, acids in Science and flour in Food lessons. In practical subjects especially the difference it will make to students' lessons, and hopefully their enjoyment of them, will be immense. Much more information will follow for students next week, in particular for Year 7 students for whom it be their first substantial experience of the school beyond E-Block. All students will have a lesson with their tutors Period 5 next Thursday where they will be given new timetables and have new arrangements explained to them. Year 7 students will also be given 'guided tours' of parts of the school they probably have never seen before. In line with what is happening nationally, this is the next small, yet very significant, step back to what we once thought of as 'normal'.

I hope you all have a good weekend ahead of the final week of a very busy half-term.

Very best wishes,

Martin Hill  
Headteacher