

Dear parents, carers and students,

Another day...another letter...No doubt you will have followed the Prime Minister's address last night with the same sense of déjà vu as me. Again, that sinking feeling as we were told children across the UK must only receive virtual education until February half-term at the earliest. In light of this, I thought it appropriate to provide you with an update on where we find ourselves today.

Public Examinations – GCSEs, A Levels and BTECs

The Department for Education has stated that public vocational exams (e.g. BTECs) and assessments scheduled to take place in January will go ahead as planned. Affected students will be contacted if things change, but in the meantime, should plan and prepare as normal for these examinations.

We were also informed that both GCSEs and A level examinations are not planned to go ahead this summer, and that The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly.

Until we have a clearer picture of what the arrangements will be, it really is a case of "business as usual" for students in Years 11 and 13. We cannot allow any students to think that remote learning doesn't count. It may be that schools are asked to provide examples of students' work, hold mock examinations or many other activities in order to validate grades and students must be prepared as best is possible for all eventualities.

What we know for certain, is that staff at Sherburn High School, will do their very best to plan appropriately and support students through this really difficult and uncertain time.

Remote Learning

In yesterday's letter information was sent home about our plans for this week. Clearly, today we have spent time preparing for the implementation of our Contingency Curriculum, which will be implemented from Monday 11th January. The details of this are below:

What happens if there is a full or partial school closure?

Within 48 hours of a partial or full school closure parents/carers will be notified of a timetable of "live" lessons, which will support the work that is set on google classrooms.*

Provision for critical workers and vulnerable families will resume - and parents/carers will be able to book these sessions via admin@shs.starmat.uk

Free school meals will be available for collection and details about these arrangements will be communicated to parents/carers.

Support for students with Special Educational Needs will resume via weekly communication by key workers.

Support for families where students' wellbeing is jeopardised will resume via weekly communication from our Achievement and Inclusion Team.

All students will receive regular "check ins" by their form tutors.**

The admin@shs.starmat.uk email will be reinstated for all families as a point of contact should anyone require additional support.

All parents will receive regular communication from the school via letters which will be emailed home - please ensure that we have your up to date email addresses and that you check your spam email boxes to avoid missing any vital communication from us.

*The timetable for “Live” lessons for all year groups will be emailed home on Thursday 7th January

** Form tutors will run two tutor group live sessions per week – on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 8.40 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. as per the school timetable.

Please remember, that to participate in live lessons, you must have returned the Acceptable User Agreement that was emailed home yesterday.

“Live” Lessons

How many “Live” sessions can my child expect across a 14-day period (their A and B timetable)?

If your child is in Years 7 and 8:

- 4 hours of English, maths and science
- 2 hours of History, Geography and French
- 1 hour of ICT and RE

If your child is in Years 9,10 and 11:

- 4 hours of English and maths
- 6 hours of science (2 for Biology, Physics and Chemistry)
- 3 hours of each of their option subjects

If your child is in Years 12 and 13:

- 4 hours, per subject

Where lessons are not “Live” work will continue to be set using Google Classrooms to provide our sustained, blended Remote Learning Curriculum

As you can imagine, this is a new venture for many of us. There isn't a simple, one size fits all in these circumstances. Staff, not only have to get used to this very different way of teaching, planning and assessing, but we also have very varying IT skills and confidences. I'm sure, that in the true Team Sherburn spirit, we will find our way through this, but I would ask that you are patient with us.

I would also like to remind you that “Live” lessons means a variety of things – put simply – it doesn't mean that your child's teacher will be on screen for an hour at a time, all day, every day. All the evidence in relation to teaching and learning, demonstrates that this is not an effective use of anyone's time. At Sherburn High School “Live” lessons includes:

- A teacher-led introduction to the tasks to be completed, the resources which will help and the time limit for completion.

- “Live” explanation using Google Meet or pre-recorded lesson commentary.
- The teacher is available for students to ask questions during the timetabled lesson.
- The teacher provides additional resources to assess learning as the lesson progresses.
- Feedback from the teacher either to individual students or as whole class feedback, in “real” time

As per the previous “Lockdown” we will continue to review and refine our offer. We know that it’s important that we plan carefully to ensure that our students make academic progress *but* are also stimulated and able to engage with each other socially. We hope that our introduction of “live” tutor group sessions and our new way of working helps strike this balance, but inevitably we will need to review, refine and reframe things as we learn, together, how to make this work.

Coronavirus Testing In Schools

We are working hard to introduce Coronavirus Lateral Flow Testing for staff and those students on-site during lockdown, and hope to begin this next week. Further information will be sent to parents/carers of students on site about this at the end of this week.

We are also busy planning for the introduction of Lateral Flow Tests for when all students are invited back into school. Further information, including consent forms, will be sent to all parents/carers in due course.

The test is voluntary and I would also like to reassure you that we will not issue a test to any young person without appropriate consent or deny any student their right to attend school should your family decide that testing within school is not appropriate for your child.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The ‘lateral flow’ tests are quick and easy using a swab of the nose and throat. For under 18s, staff will oversee the swab process. We are informed that in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

An update on the enhanced precautions in school associated with coronavirus infection prevention

Key school staff have been reviewing our School Risk Assessment to ensure all students and staff in school are safe and supported. This has been completed in response to information received from the government about the new strain of coronavirus. Key features include:

- An enhanced cleaning and sanitation regime;
- Re-briefing staff and students about the requirement to socially distance and minimise contact;
- Minimising staff attendance on the school site;
- Minimising staff and student movement around the school site;
- Robust internal track and trace procedures;
- Enhanced personal hygiene provision and expectations.

And finally...

Yet again, an immense challenge presents itself to us this half term. We also know, on past experience, that nothing can be certain at this stage as to what will transpire at the end of that time. When we were last in this situation, with extraordinary energy and a real sense of “Team Sherburn” spirit, we pulled through it together. I have no doubt that the Sherburn High School community – students, parents/carers, teachers, support staff, governors and trustees – can do so once more.

As always, with thanks in advance for your support;

Miriam Oakley