

20<sup>th</sup> March 2020



Dear Year 11 students

It has been a very strange day for me today, not welcoming you all to school this morning or making copious cups of tea in Breakfast Club! I am so thankful for the opportunity to have spoken to you yesterday, although I can't help but feel somewhat saddened by the fact that I could not address you all, as a full year group. I know that many of you have been staying at home recently, for various reasons, so I wanted to write to you all as there are so many things I wish to express (and things that I forgot to say amidst the tears!)

Firstly, a huge 'well done'. In these uncertain times, it is only natural to feel subdued and overwhelmed, however I am incredibly proud of how each of you have handled the news with such maturity and understanding. Watching you all listen so intently to us in assembly yesterday was truly heart-warming and a reminder of just how lucky we are to work with you all. I said it several times yesterday, but it really is a privilege to be your Head of Year.

Secondly, I know you all have so many questions surrounding your results and how your grades will be acquired. At the time of writing, the DfE have just released some more information about this. It seems that students will be issued with a grade calculated from some kind of teacher assessment and taking into account other contextual information. Importantly, it looks as if there will be an opportunity to sit an exam in the autumn and/or the summer of next year. Our immediate reaction is that this is a sensible approach, but – like you – we still have lots of questions. Please try not to contact us with questions because we know no more than you at the moment. Of course, we'll be in touch as soon as we do. Either way, try to remember that this is something we cannot control, and for the hundreds of thousands of Year 11s and 13s, now is a time to for us to look after each other and focus on what we can control. It might also be worth saying that we are in a much stronger position than the vast majority of schools because of our excellent exam results in recent years.

Regardless of what grades you will receive, you are all so much more than a number on a piece of paper. As young people, the skills that you have developed throughout your journey at Lymm High, far exceed what can be taught in the classroom. I can honestly say, in all sincerity, that you have all become wonderfully kind, thoughtful, considerate and responsible young people. Watching you all interact with your tutors, teachers and each other yesterday is proof of that! I could not be more proud of you.

Thirdly, I understand that many of you feel disappointed that you have not yet had your 'leavers' events and many of you have emailed to request seeing your teachers 'one last time'. Like Mr Williams said yesterday, you all deserve so much more than a last- minute event; it simply would not have been right to have brought you all in today to sign shirts and see staff. We have a duty of care, first and foremost, to really prioritise the health and well-being of you, your families and our community. Therefore, when the current situation stabilises and we are back up and running, I promise that I will do you proud and arrange the leavers events that you truly deserve. This will include a leavers morning at school, followed by a spectacular prom to which all of your teachers will be invited. This will give you a proper opportunity to see them again and extend your thanks and well wishes.

Headteacher: Mr Gwyn Williams

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Finally, in the weeks and months that lie ahead, I know that lots of you may be feeling lost and will be wondering what to do with your time. Revising and completing work has been a huge part of your lives over the past months and, whilst some of you won't admit it, we are creatures of habit and really thrive on consistency and routine! As we suggested yesterday, it doesn't quite seem right to encourage you to revise. However, we would encourage you to try and keep your day as structured as you can. Use your time for self-care and to really focus on your well-being. As Mrs Ryles-Dean suggested yesterday: read a book, FaceTime your friends, go for a walk or learn a language! I would also encourage those of you planning to continue your studies at A-Level to do some pre-reading around your chosen courses. As a starting point, you may want to purchase any revision guides or textbooks to help you with this; however we will update you with further advice on this after Easter. Keep yourselves busy but remember to be responsible and adhere to the government guidelines surrounding social distancing and self-isolation to protect yourselves, your families and the wider community.

Talking of A'levels, for those of you who have applied to our sixth form, you should now have received your offer letter. Whilst these letters specify the entrance requirements needed for sixth form, we will of course take into account the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in. Once we have further information regarding how students will be awarded their qualifications, we will share this with you but please be reassured that teachers know you very well and what you are capable of so, in reality, none of this should make any real difference to sixth form applications. If you are concerned, please direct any queries to Mrs Jennings but please do understand that she is very unlikely to be able to provide any answers at the moment.

I would like to end with a final note of thanks to each and every one of you. I know that I am not the same teacher I was when I joined in 2017 and took over as your Head of Year. Through our interactions and in leading you all, I believe that I have changed for the better. You have taught me to be a more patient and considerate person and brought out the very best in me and each other. So many of you have inspired me through your own displays of strength and resilience in facing your own personal struggles and challenges. For that: thank you.

Remember, you have not left, you are still very much ours. We are here to offer you any support and guidance that you may need:

Mrs Feast- [efeast@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:efeast@lymmhigh.org.uk)

Mrs Ryles-Dean- [hryles-dean@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:hryles-dean@lymmhigh.org.uk)

Mrs Hunter- [rhunter@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:rhunter@lymmhigh.org.uk)

Please take care and look after yourselves. You have all been amazing.

Mrs Feast

p.s. On the following pages is some more information from Mr Williams. Please take a few moments to consider it.

Dear students, parents and carers

Firstly, let me wish you all the best for the weeks ahead. This is obviously an unprecedented situation and it is likely to be a challenging time for all of us. We know people will be worried and, like you, cannot be sure what exactly happens next. However, I want you to know that, as a school, we care a great deal about your well-being and will be doing everything we can to support you.

We will try keep in touch with any new information but, in the meantime, please bear in mind the following information.

### **Social Responsibility**

Perhaps most importantly, all of us have a great **social responsibility** to do all we can to help the country get through the current situation. From a school perspective, this includes remaining open to children of key workers so that they can continue to get to work to keep the country running.

From your perspective, it is vital to follow the government advice as regards **self-isolation and social distancing**. Whilst young people are very low risk in terms of the likely severity of any symptoms of Covid-19 themselves, it would be deeply selfish to think only in these terms. All of us need to avoid unnecessary contact in order to help stop the virus spreading. I would be extremely disappointed, for example, to see or hear of groups of students gathering together to socialise in the current climate.

### **Health & well-being and safeguarding**

It is really important you look after yourself during this time. This includes **eating** properly and drinking plenty of **water**.

**Exercising** regularly (in line with advice about self-isolation and social distancing) is also vital. There are plenty of online videos that you can use to inspire you with activities to maintain fitness without leaving the home.

If you do have concerns about your child's wellbeing or mental health, please contact either Mrs Ryles-Dean ([hryles-dean@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:hryles-dean@lymmhigh.org.uk)) or Mrs Ball ([rball@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:rball@lymmhigh.org.uk)). Below are some websites that may also be useful:

Website	Address	Details
Childline	<a href="https://www.childline.org.uk/">https://www.childline.org.uk/</a> (or call 0800 1111)	
Kooth	<a href="https://www.kooth.com/">https://www.kooth.com/</a>	Online counselling and emotional support for young people
The Proud Trust	<a href="https://www.theproudtrust.org/for-young-people/">https://www.theproudtrust.org/for-young-people/</a>	Support for young people with regards to LGBT+ issues
ChatHealth	<a href="https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/chathealth/">https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/chathealth/</a>	Secure and confidential text messaging service for young people. It allows patients to easily and anonymously get in touch with a healthcare professional for advice and support

Brook	<a href="https://www.brook.org.uk">https://www.brook.org.uk</a>	Information and advice on a range of issues, including sexual health
Social Services	<a href="https://www.warrington.gov.uk/socialservices">https://www.warrington.gov.uk/socialservices</a>	Warrington Social Services

Any student or parent with a **safeguarding** concern should share their concerns as soon as they are able to, via either TellUs (using the QR Code below) or Mrs Ball ([rball@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:rball@lymmhigh.org.uk)) or Miss Clark ([aclark@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:aclark@lymmhigh.org.uk))



### **Free School Meals**

We are arranging for vouchers to be issued for families entitled to free school meals for the first couple of weeks, while we await details of a government scheme for this.

**Local foodbanks** include:

- Warrington Foodbank - 2 Tanning Court, Warrington, WA1 2HF - 07583080521
- Emmaus Church - Capesthorpe Road, Orford, WA2 9AP - 07583080521
- Quench Cafe - 50 Lodge Drive, Culcheth, WA3 4ER - 07583080521

### **Children of key workers**

We will remain open to support families of vulnerable children and/or where one or more parent is a key worker. This is a duty we are taking very seriously and we'd just like to remind families of key workers that they should **only send students in where there really isn't any alternative**; the whole point of school closure is to minimise the number of people who are out of the home. Our assumption is that Year 11 students are very unlikely to need this provision because they can be safely left at home.

At the time of writing, we are just saying school will be open at the usual times and buses will run as normal. Students should arrive in uniform. However, it is highly likely we will make changes to the normal routine once we have a clearer idea of how many students are involved, how many staff are available and what the needs of the community are. Our intention is to be as flexible as possible in order to support these key workers. This might even include being open at weekends. We will, of course, keep you informed and seek your views on this where appropriate.

Once again, all the best for the coming weeks. I'm sure that we will pull together to support one another.

Kind regards

Gwyn Williams