

Headteacher's Update: 22nd May 2020

Dear parents and carers

I don't know about you, but lockdown seems to be doing funny things to my perception of time. There have been occasions where I have felt the days have been crawling along and there are others when there just aren't enough hours in the day. Indeed, I find myself shocked that we have reached May half-term already. I do hope you are all well.

Please note, we will not be setting any **work for students over half-term** so that they can have a proper break and be ready to learn again from 1st June.

Messages relating to different year groups are included below, but a few that relate to everyone are:

- Please [click here](#) for a message relating to anyone involved in the **Duke of Edinburgh** programme.
- Watch out for the launch of our laptop programme within the next few days. With the increase in online lessons we are providing, and in the expectation that social distancing is now very likely to continue into the next academic year, it will be very important for every student to have a suitable device. Our programme will allow you to buy laptops at very favourable rates and will include additional support for families who are struggling financially at the moment.
- School remains very much open for children of **keyworkers and for vulnerable children**. The latest government guidance on this, including details of who exactly falls into these categories can be found [here](#). We will remain open throughout half-term, including on bank holiday Monday, for critical workers who need us. Please email keyworkers@lymmhigh.org.uk if you are intending to send your child in at any stage.
- If they haven't already seen it, please encourage students to watch the **celebration assembly** from earlier this week. Very well done to all those who featured – the talent shown in some of the competitions was almost frightening!

Best wishes for a restful half-term, and I shall be in touch again soon.

Kind regards
Gwyn Williams

Years 7, 8 & 9

Judging from the flood of messages we've had, the launch of our **online lessons programme** this week has gone down very well. Some of the problems we had on the first day have drastically reduced already and, from our perspective, we are delighted at the progress that has been made. We will continue to do all we can to develop this programme over the next few weeks and I thank you again in advance for your patience and understanding where things don't run quite as smoothly as we'd hope.

In due course, we will seek more feedback from parents and carers, but the initial feeling seems to be that three online lessons a day is about the right amount for KS3 students. Therefore, although the timetable will need to be tweaked in order for us to schedule online lessons for Year 10 and 12, for next half-term KS3 students can expect a similar number of online lessons as they've had this week. We cannot promise yet, but we are hoping that we will be able to construct a timetable that means group sizes will be smaller for many lessons too.

Finally on this, I want to pay tribute again to all those teachers who have worked so hard to get to grips with online lessons this week. Many have said it has felt like they are a trainee teacher all over again – and who would want their first few days of a job being broadcast live into hundreds of homes?! I know they have really appreciated those messages of support from students, parents and carers; so, thank you too.

Year 10

As explained in my letter earlier in the week, Year 10 would have been included in the programme of online lessons for this week had the government not dropped something of a bombshell by telling us that we needed to be ready to open from 1st June for some face-to-face time with this year group.

Regardless of plans for re-opening, I am delighted to be able to confirm that Year 10 students will have a programme of **four hours a day of live, online lessons starting from Monday 1st June**. We will be in touch next week with the details, including a timetable, but I'm sure you'll agree that this is a fabulous offer; over 80% of the usual timetable will now be made up of online lessons. As we have asked of KS3 students this week, please bear with us if things don't all run smoothly at first – there are bound to be a few glitches, but I'm equally sure we'll get on top of them in short order.

On the **question of whether or not school will be opening for Year 10 students** after the break, I had hoped to be able to give you some more details by now but I am afraid that still isn't the case. We have been working exceptionally hard over the last two weeks to prepare for various scenarios depending upon what the detailed government advice turns out to be but, at the time of writing, this guidance hasn't arrived. In any case, we know that the government is going to be reviewing the latest science on 28th May before making a decision on whether or not its five tests have been met and schools can re-open to more students. I am fighting my instincts to provide you with more detail about possible options for re-opening, but hope you will understand when I say that it would be silly to say much more at this stage; there are just too many unknowns. Realistically, I will not be able to give you any more meaningful information until after 28th May.

What I can say (as I did in my video message last week) is that we will not be in a position to do much before 8th June because we are not confident that we could do so safely by that point. This reflects the information contained in this [important letter](#) from Warrington Borough Council that I urge you to take a few moments to read. I can also say that the kinds of measures referred to in the letter are exactly the kinds of things that we are considering in our own risk assessments.

Please rest assured that we will not, under any circumstances, be pressuring any family to send their child into school if you do not want to. We will also be sharing detailed plans with you in plenty of time for you to consider them before having to make any decisions.

Year 11

There have, understandably, been a few 'wobbles' from some Year 11 students this week as they realised that they would be in the midst of exams had the lockdown been enforced. I remain hugely sympathetic to them all and hope they are managing amidst all the uncertainty.

That said, there have been a much bigger number asking about a prom and leavers assembly, which suggests they are not all too worried about exams! Our promise here remains the same: we will do something when circumstances allow, and we will do it properly.

Most form tutors have been holding virtual tutor group sessions via Teams this week and many students have enjoyed these. Please ask them to watch out for more of these in the future, as well as for the weekly messages on Teams from Mrs Feast.

Similarly, watch out for the various virtual careers events that we have been running and Mrs Dowdall has been promoting. Feedback on these has been really positive.

As regards work, we are pleased to hear that so many students have been making such good progress with the transition to sixth form materials and that it has been providing a useful focus and structure. Keep an eye out for further details from Mrs Jennings about the next block of transition work after half-term.

Year 12 and 13

Please see a [separate letter](#) for sixth form students, parents and carers.