

## Headteacher's Update: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear parents and carers

The big news this week is obviously that the government has said **all schools should open to all students, full-time, from September**. We are delighted about this and already cannot wait to see everyone back in school. You can read some information the government has put together for parents and carers [here](#).

We appreciate that many of you will have concerns about how this can be safely managed, and I want to reassure you that we are taking this responsibility very seriously – alongside the need to ensure that we still provide a high quality, well-rounded education for all students.

There are a huge number of logistical challenges involved, especially in a school the size of ours and with the particular layout of buildings that we have. Senior leaders are working non-stop to draw up detailed plans, and this includes consulting with staff and governors (including parent governors), comparing ideas with other schools and taking further advice from experts. I am sure you will understand that we don't want to publish too much detail until we are confident the plan we have is the best possible one for Lymm High School, but we will be giving parents and carers the chance to ask questions and will publish another Frequently Asked Questions document as soon as we can.

For the time being, I shall just say the following:

- The government are making it very clear that they expect all students to attend school from September and I can confirm that we will be able to facilitate this
- Because of the number of buses that we have, it is unlikely that the timings of the school day will change significantly – although it is a possibility that we may need to change them slightly
- The kinds of actions we will be taking to help keep students and staff safe will include:
  - Enforcing extensive measures to promote good respiratory and hand hygiene
  - Implementing changes to the structure of the school day to limit movement around corridors
  - Taking measures to limit contact between students in different year groups wherever possible
  - Implementing different arrangements for lunchtime, especially use of the canteen
  - Limiting extra-curricular activities, at least until we are confident other measures are working well
  - Avoiding large gatherings, such as full assemblies
  - Limiting the number of external visitors to only the most essential ones
- We will be back in full uniform (please see message in next section about this)
- We are also working on a programme to support students in catching up on any important lost learning from lockdown – especially for current Year 10 students
- Most Year 13 A' level classes (and certainly the larger ones) will receive additional teaching time next year to help address any shortfalls in learning and make sure they are fully prepared for their exams.

I think it is important to be honest right from the start and say that the measures we take will never be perfect and that we should note that the government decision to instruct schools to fully re-open is based on the evidence that the risk to children becoming very ill with the Covid virus is low. For example, we shouldn't be getting too hung up on the notion of perfect 'bubbles' in secondary schools; it is impossible to

implement these fully whilst running anything like a conventional curriculum (leaving aside all the issues outside of our control such as lots of students having siblings in different year groups and travel to and from school). What we can do, however, is take every opportunity to put sensible protective measures in place and keep communicating with staff and parents to make changes wherever necessary.

I'd like to thank you all once again for your support throughout all of this. It gives me great comfort to know that parents and carers at Lymm High School will be sensible and measured about the next steps. We will be in touch with more information as soon as possible.

## **Messages for all year groups**

- We are very conscious that, regardless of changes to government guidance, there will still be some students with medical conditions that make them especially vulnerable to the Covid virus and that some of these may need to continue **shielding in September**. If this applies to your child, please let your Head of Year know as soon as possible so that we can start planning to do whatever we can to support you.
- This week marks the first week where all **online lessons will be taking place via Zoom**, including being able to see faces on screens. A few teachers have been trialling this recently and have had a good deal of success. [Click here](#) for the original letter from Ms Brennan on this. Please make sure you have read the expectations necessary to help us safeguard students and staff and discuss them with your child. We would also appreciate it if you could encourage students to show their faces on screens; we realise some students will be nervous about this at first, but it really does help to improve the learning experience and the trials have shown that the vast majority very quickly get over any initial shyness.
- Mrs Ryles-Dean has been urging staff and students this this week to start their **Lymm High Challenge 5**. As you are aware, normally at this time of year we would be busy organising a big fundraiser to celebrate Founders' Day. Traditionally all students and staff would be involved in a charity 5k walk, where typically we raise well over £5000 for our Hall charities. This year, we are challenging everyone to do something at home that includes the number 5 and to ask friends and family to sponsor them. We already have some 5k runs planned and a staff cycling team cycling 55 miles. It could be anything: staying silent for 5 hours, doing 50 press ups for 5 days or whatever. Please encourage your child to get involved and if you are in a position to, please donate any sponsorship money via Parent Pay. If we could get every student to raise £4 before the 21<sup>st</sup> July, we would see over a £1000 raised for each Charity - The Christie, Help for Heroes, The Meningitis Trust, Claire House and St Roccas.
- Please remember that end-of-year assessments will be taking place for Key Stage 3 and Year 10 next week (with Year 12 mock exams taking place this week). If you have not already read the separate communications on this, please click the relevant links below:
  - [Original letter for Key Stage 3 parents and carers](#)
  - [Original letter for Year 10 parents and carers](#)
  - [Original letter for Year 12 parents and carers](#)
  - [Year 7 timetable and details of assessment topics](#)
  - [Year 8 timetable and details of assessment topics](#)
  - [Year 9 timetable and details of assessment topics](#)

- [Year 10 timetable and details of assessment topics](#)
- One of the things that is clear in the government guidance for September is that they expect schools to operate normal **uniform** policies. The guidance explains that uniform should not need to be washed any more often than usual, or any differently. Therefore, please be advised that we will be back in full uniform for the new term. Mr Thompson will be in touch shortly with the usual reminders we issue at this time of year but, as ever, we ask that you consult the school website before buying any new item of clothing for school and that a good rule of thumb is often: “if you have to ask your child whether something is acceptable, it probably isn’t”. If in doubt, please ask us before spending your money.
- If you missed the deadline to buy a **Chromebook** last time around, there is another opportunity to order one before 12<sup>th</sup> July – along with families with students currently in Year 6. Click [here](#) for details. Whilst it doesn’t now look like online lessons will be needed in September, they will still be useful for homework and revision – and in the event of any future lockdown of any kind.
- The final day of this school year is **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July**. Please note there will be no online lessons on this day, but there will be virtual end-of-year assemblies for all year groups. As you’d expect, we will need to make some changes to the start of next year and will confirm exact details nearer the time. What we can say now is that Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September will be for new Year 7 and 12 students only so that we can ensure they get a proper induction process in the light of not being able to run induction days this term. It may also be necessary to stagger the start for other year groups once we have finalised plans for re-opening, so that we can properly trial any new systems before all 1900 students return.

## **Key Stage Four and Five**

- Please note that the end-of-year assessments mean that **Year 10 students will not be in school on either Monday 13<sup>th</sup> or Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July**. Given that school closes for summer the following Wednesday anyway, this means that students in the Monday and Tuesday groups will still have had the same amount of time in school as those in the Thursday and Friday groups.
- There were two significant announcements from **Ofqual** (the body that oversees exams) last week. Firstly, they have released some [initial information](#) about an **exam series in the autumn** for GCSE and A’ level students who are not happy with the grades they receive this summer. This link also includes some basic information about the appeals process for the summer. There is not a great deal of detail, but the key point is that there will be exams available in all subjects (with no coursework in most cases) in October for A’ levels and November for GCSEs. We will, of course, let you know more as soon as we hear anything – but the first step is obviously to get results for this summer first.
- Secondly, Ofqual have launched a [consultation](#) over **exams for the summer of 2021** (i.e. those affecting students currently in Year 10 and Year 12). It is important to stress that this is only a consultation and no decisions will be made until August at least, but it does offer a welcome indication of their thinking. Broadly speaking, exams look as if they will run as normal but with some potentially significant changes in some subjects, such as less coursework and/or more choice of topics. They also open up the prospect of pushing the dates of exams back to allow for more teaching time. My initial impressions are that the proposals are generally sensible and, with a big effort from all concerned next year, there is absolutely no reason to think Lymm High students will

not get the same kinds of grades they would have got had there been no lockdown. It is worth bearing in mind that, regardless of the format of exams, the process of 'comparable outcomes' that is used to award grades means that the 2021 cohort will still see roughly the same number of grades awarded at each level – even if, as we might expect, the grade boundaries for each grade end up needing to be a bit lower.

- Last week, Year 12 students were all sent information about our new **virtual futures programme** that we have put together in an effort to compensate for the cancellation of their work experience and in school careers programme. The programme has also been shared with **Year 11 students** who may wish to spend some time working through it over the next couple of weeks. The online programme will take students through the job application cycle – including identifying their key skills and attributes, preparing a CV or job application, preparing for interview and discovering other selection processes. It also includes some mock interview preparation and there is a chance to experience some virtual work experience. Further details and the structure of the programme can be found [here](#). Please note that we are expecting all our Year 12 students to complete this and return to school in September with their updated booklets.
- We are also excited about our first **virtual careers festival** that will be running on the Learn Live platform on **Wednesday 15th July**. This will be open to all students across the school, but we hope that everyone in Years 10 and above will engage with some of the sessions throughout the day. More details will be sent out during the week to students and parents.
- Finally, we are busy planning **exam results days** for Year 11 and Year 13 students. A' level results day will be on 13<sup>th</sup> August and GCSE results day on 20<sup>th</sup> August. There will be an option to receive results by email, but we also want to allow students to come and get them in person in the traditional way (with appropriate adjustments for social distancing, of course!) so that they do not miss out on this important rite of passage. We will be in touch with details nearer the time.

Kind regards

Gwyn Williams