

Whole School

Letter from Mr Williams

Dear parents and carers

As ever, I hope you have had a good week amidst all the challenges presented by lockdown – especially with the added issues presented by all the poor weather we've had to contend with.

Please see below for messages this week, including the all-important news about when schools might return to opening for more students. I suspect many of us were not surprised by the Prime Minister's announcement, but it's desperately disappointing all the same to know that we won't be back straight after half-term.

On the other hand, there are certainly reasons to be optimistic. My grandfather (who happens to have his 100th birthday today) received a Covid vaccination earlier this week, which is of great reassurance to us as a family and I hope many of you have similar stories regarding your own loved ones. Fingers crossed that the vaccination programme continues to gather pace and we quickly get to the point where things can start returning to normal.

Kind regards

Gwyn Williams

Re-opening of schools

We now know that schools will not be re-opening more widely before 8th March. I am wary of speculating too much about what this will mean in practice (I don't have any more information than you do on this) but do think it is prudent to work on the assumption that most secondary year groups could well end up being off school for a few more weeks beyond that date. Primary schools and students in exam year groups are likely to be prioritised.

We will be ready to re-open to all students the minute the government gives us the go ahead, and we are raring for that day to come. We are confident that we can keep measures in place to minimise risks to students and staff in school, but it will be for others to decide when the right moment is to re-open in terms of the wider impact on society and the NHS. If we can all return on 8th March, then that will be fantastic. If not, I know we will all continue to try to make the best of it but, as I say, in the meantime I think it will be wise for us all to prepare psychologically and practically for the possibility of the lockdown lasting a bit longer than 8th March.

As regards those students in exam years, the announcement doesn't change anything. We should have some more details by the end of February about the process for awarding grades, but students should continue working on the assumption that we will be back in school in plenty of time for assessments in one form or another to take place. I have to say, we are so impressed with the attitude shown by Year 11 and 13 so far in this regard; they really have been amazing.

Parent/carer survey

Many thanks to those of you who completed the brief survey earlier this week. It's really important that we keep getting regular feedback and we have had a good look at your responses. The main messages were remarkably consistent:

- You were incredibly positive and complimentary about the quality of remote learning, communication and support being provided by school at the moment, as well as empathetic and understanding of the challenges facing teachers. At the time of writing, we have had 566

responses and, of these, over 98% agreed with the statements about being pleased with provision – with over 60% saying you ‘strongly agree’. For a survey of this type, those kinds of figures are remarkable. On top of this, there were literally hundreds of lovely messages of goodwill and thanks for the structure provided by live lessons and the efforts of teachers – with most of you recognising how hard it is to maintain energy levels when trying to motivate teenagers from afar! We want you to know that we hugely appreciate the support and encouragement. At the same time, please know that we don’t take anything for granted: we will keep working hard to do the best job we can under the circumstances and trying to adapt as we learn more about what works best.

The responses to the question about what isn’t going so well were also very consistent:

- Whilst you were clear that you didn’t think we could do much more as a school about it, many of you have children who are finding it hard to stay motivated and are really missing the daily social interaction with their friends. You – and the children – have our sympathy: it can’t be easy, and will certainly require a good dose of old-fashioned self-discipline to keep focused through the next few weeks.
- Quite a few of you reported that your children are finding the 100-minute lessons hard going at times. Unfortunately, it’s not practical to re-write the whole-school timetable, but we have introduced breaks in lessons for KS3 students and are encouraging teachers to ensure they regularly set tasks that don’t necessarily involve staring at the screen. It was clear that many of you have found this has made a big difference recently and hopefully that will continue.
- A small minority said you’d like a few more lessons to be ‘offline’ but the general consensus was very firmly that live lessons work best and we should stick with them. We will, however, introduce the odd ‘screen-free’ day (see below) to provide a bit of a break and some more variety.
- Many of you also said you would like to see more students with cameras on and find your children engage more when they have theirs on. We agree and will keep trying to encourage students to show their faces – your support here will be much appreciated! Please also do what you can to check from time-to-time that your children are taking part in lessons by giving answers verbally or through the chat function and completing work to the best of their ability. With the best will in the world, it’s not possible at the moment for teachers to monitor these things anywhere near as effectively as they can in school and any support you can provide will help. (N.b. As ever, we absolutely understand how difficult all this is, especially when you are trying to work from home as well. It can only ever be about doing what we can do and trying not to worry beyond that.)

Screen-free day: Wednesday 3rd February

58% of you said in the survey that you thought it would be a good idea to have the odd day away from screens and focusing on some different activities. A further 28% said you wouldn’t mind either way. We will, therefore, be trialling this on Wednesday 3rd February and so there will be no normal lessons on this day. Further details will be sent out early next week. It won’t be 100% screen-free in the sense that students may need to log-on to see the tasks or upload evidence of what they have been up to, but this aspect will be absolutely minimal (and students can even view the tasks the night before if they are feeling especially organised).

Apologies to the 14% of you who would rather not do this. We understand why but we think, on balance, it is worth a try. Some of you felt that your children will just take the opportunity to look at Xbox or phone screens instead, but we will make sure there are sufficient activities to keep them busy during school hours and so there shouldn't be any excuse for them doing this. If it might help even a tiny bit, feel free to tell them that their headteacher has officially said they are not allowed on phones during the day, and certainly not their PlayStation! This will be the only day like this before half-term and we will review it before deciding whether to schedule one or two next half-term.

If your child has been in school as a vulnerable child or because you are a keyworker, then please [click here](#) to complete this very short survey to let us know whether or not your child will be in school next Wednesday. You do not need to complete this if your child has not been in school since January.

Revision support

Our website provides a wide range of resources to make revising for exams easier to manage for both students and parents. Revision plays a vital role in student success and we want to ensure you have access to as many tools as possible.

In the [revision section of our website](#) we have created a revision guide for both KS3 and KS4. This includes the recommended revision guides, revision techniques and ways to cope with exam stress. There is also a revision timetable template to help students plan their revision with guidance on how to manage their time.

PTA Lockdown Quiz

Join us on Friday 4th February for Lymm High's Lockdown quiz. As online learning becomes the new norm, it is essential that all students have access to the appropriate technology to engage with this new way of teaching. This PTA quiz is a fundraiser for IT equipment for disadvantaged families. You can help by buying a ticket for the quiz for a minimum donation of £10 per family. Then all you need to do is email PTAQuiz@lymmhigh.org.uk with the email address you want the Zoom link sending to. It should be a fun evening and we look forward to seeing as many people as possible taking part. The quiz should last around an hour and there are some great prizes to be won!

You can buy your ticket here: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/lymm-high-school>

LHS Lottery

Congratulations to Ms McGuinness who was this week's school lottery winner! You could be a winner too!

If you have not signed up for our lottery yet, please head to our dedicated lottery website [here](#). If you want to find out how it works, please [click here](#). Tickets are only £1 each week. Your support would be hugely appreciated.

LOWER SCHOOL

Year 9 Parents' Evening – 4th February

The booking system for Year 9 Parents' Evening is open from today. Please refer to Mr Scott's [letter](#) for further information.

KS3 exams

Well done to our KS3 students this week for taking their assessments seriously and trying their hardest. We have been really impressed with their positive attitude towards them. Please remember to take scores with something of a 'pinch of salt' at the present time; we appreciate this will not be a true reflection of students'

progress in every case during school closure and we will not be using results to inform things like setting, for example. The purpose of these assessments was to give students some much-needed focus and purpose in their core subjects and to consolidate learning from the first term. Although content in these assessments was from the Autumn term, we appreciate that student and staff absence will have played a significant role in some students' progress and scores, and it is also for this reason that we will not be solely relying on them to make important decisions regarding attainment and progress. That said, we know many students have worked hard on them and will be rightly proud of the results they've achieved, and we extend our 'well done' to all students for giving it their best. We will send results home in due course and more information will follow about this soon.

UPPER SCHOOL

Year 11 Parents' Evening

Year 11 Parents' Evening is planned for Thursday 11th February. Details will be sent out next week.

Sixth Form interviews

Students who have applied to join us in the Sixth Form next year have now received their interview time via email. Interviews will take place week commencing 1st February.

If you have any queries regarding your interview time, please contact mwedgwood@lymmhigh.org.uk. If you have not applied, but still wish to be considered for a place, please do get in touch.