

Dear parents and carers

### **Changing plans**

What a strange start to the academic year! Over the New Year we were planning for all students to be learning remotely this week; for Y11 to return next week; for mass Covid-19 testing of all year groups; and for all other students to return later in January. On Monday evening, as part of a return to a national lockdown, all plans changed and we now know that **secondary school students will currently not return to lessons until after the February Half Term week.**

**Critical/key worker and vulnerable children** are the exception to this, and our students whose parents/carers had notified us of the need for them to have places in school started back on Tuesday. We had 66 students in school, from all year groups, whose families' jobs mean they fall under these definitions. Students are remaining in year group 'bubbles' and will be supervised and supported in their learning by associate staff: pastoral, teaching assistant and other support colleagues. They will follow the same timetable and access the same live lessons and online learning as their peers who are working at home. They are arriving and leaving at their usual staggered times, but are able to sit in the Hall/dining area from 8.15am in year group 'bubbles.'

### **Students working from home**

All other students are expected to complete all work set for them on a daily basis via google classroom and Edulinkone. Where lessons are being delivered via live online teaching, all students are expected to 'attend' as detailed in my last newsletter. Here are the timings for the school day so that students know when to attend:

- 8:40 to 9:00 - virtual form time (only on Mondays)
- 9:00 to 10:00 - lesson 1
- 10:00 to 11:00 - lesson 2
- 11:00 to 11:15 - break
- 11:15 to 12:15 - lesson 3
- 12:15 to 12:50 - lunch
- 12:50 to 13:50 - lesson 4
- 13:50 to 14:50 - lesson 5
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Please check that your child is accessing, completing and submitting their work each day. **Wherever possible, they need to complete the work during the allocated hour for that lesson: eg if they have Maths P1, they need to complete their Maths between 9.00 and 10.00am so they can keep on top of their work!**

### **Keeping-In-Touch Calls and Virtual form time**

During the first lockdown, all parents/carers and/or students were contacted by phone as a way of keeping in touch. Now that technology allows us to move to a system of live lessons, phone calls will not be prioritised for all families because students will have virtual face to face contact with their teachers. This face to face contact will include a Monday form time from 8:40 to 9:00, which students are expected to attend. The form time will give the students an opportunity to tell their form teachers how they are getting on with their work and if they are having any issues. This

time will also be used for other activities based around the PSHE curriculum and to enable students working from home to keep in touch with peers.

### **Achievement points**

In addition to our usual rewards, there is now a new category on edulinkone. Students can receive achievement points to recognise the work that they have been doing at home. Please congratulate your child if you see that they have earned '*Remote Learning*' points through edulink.

### **Year 7 and 8 Home Learning Booklets**

The home learning booklets will be suspended during the lockdown to allow the students to focus on the five lessons per day that their teachers will be setting for them. This also allows the teachers to have the time to plan, teach remotely, mark and monitor student work.

### **PE Lessons**

Year 7-8 PE lessons will not be live lessons. Students have been set a project to undertake at home. They can use their designated PE lesson time to get on with this work. However, students are encouraged to do some form of daily exercise within the government lockdown guidelines..

Year 9-11 Core PE lessons will not be set at home due to practicality issues. Students in years 9-11 must use this time to catch up (or get ahead) with their other subjects. Alternatively, they can use the time to go for their daily exercise eg to go for a walk or a jog.

### **PSHE Lessons**

Timetabled PSHE lessons will also not be taught at home through live lessons. Instead, these topics will be covered during the virtual form sessions. When students have PSHE on their timetable, they should catch up (or get ahead) with their other subjects, because the time pressures of each lesson means they may need extra time to complete some tasks.

### **GCSE examinations 2021: assessments are NOT cancelled**

As part of the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday evening, we learnt that there will be **significant changes to GCSE exams**/the assessment processes for current Y11 students. The DfE Bulletin states: 'In these circumstances, we do not think it is possible or fair for all exams this summer to go ahead as planned. The Secretary of State for Education will therefore work with Ofqual to put in place alternative arrangements after consultation with the sector.'

Ofqual's update as of 6th January: 'We know that this is a difficult time for students, their parents and carers, teachers and trainers. Our message to students is this: please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education. That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going in to their school, college or training provider. This will put you in the best position, **whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications.**'

**This does NOT mean that there will be no formal GCSE assessments for Y11 students.**

Mr Watson is writing a separate letter for Y11 students and families, but I must reiterate just how vitally important it is that our Y11 students produce their best possible work; maximise their academic efforts; and make the strongest progress over the coming months. I already know how disappointed many of our students are: believing they will not now have the opportunity to shine in a traditional public examination, but they must maintain their ambition, commitment and desire for success in order that they are best placed to meet the challenges of whatever forms of assessment they are likely to face as this year progresses and so that they are well prepared for post-16 educational opportunities and applications..



### **Covid-19 mass testing in school**

On Monday morning we took delivery of our first consignment of LFD (Lateral Flow Device) testing kits and associated PPE. A number of colleagues, led by Mr Kewin (Covid-19 school co-ordinator) and Mr Middlemas (Team Leader) and myself have undertaken the training modules and assessments needed to carry out the various roles in the testing process. This prompt response from school meant that our team was able to set up our testing location with registration, swabbing, processing and recording stations following stringent NHS guidelines, and was then able to trial the system on Monday afternoon (thanks to Mr Cawley for being the first subject!) On Tuesday, the team carried out tests with 26 critical/key worker/vulnerable students whose families had already provided consent, and with over 30 staff. All participants tested negative - which is a great reassurance for everyone working and learning within our school, and for their families. Students handled themselves with great maturity and clearly understood the importance of the process and its outcome. Tests will continue this week with all consenting students and staff in school, and the second round of tests will then commence on Friday. It is a great credit to our school that we have been able to begin testing so quickly and efficiently, and reflects our school-wide commitment to promoting the health and safety of our community.

### **Charity work**

During the last week of term before Christmas the school took part in a Christmas jumper / hat day for students, with the proceeds raised going to Petrus, a local charity in Rochdale which does excellent work to help the homeless. We are very proud that the students and staff raised a total of £260 which will be put to extremely good use by this very worthwhile charity.

### **New colleagues**

This week we have welcomed two new colleagues: Mr Shepherd as our Attendance Improvement Manager, and Mrs Raza as Teacher in charge of Geography. Both bring with them considerable experience of working in other North West schools. We wish them a very successful and happy time at Whitworth Community High School.

Best wishes



Mrs G Middlemas  
Headteacher

