



Perschore High School

6th April 2020

Quality education
for all in a
challenging,
supportive and
safe environment



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Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your family well given our current collective circumstances. Thank you for your ongoing messages of support and suggestions on what else we could do to facilitate learning over the last week, both are much appreciated.

Firstly, I wanted to say thank you for guiding the students through the last two weeks of the spring term and well done on what is probably your first experience of prolonged home learning. It is quite an achievement to have navigated everyone safely through to this point; no doubt there will have been highs and lows, but all experiences to draw upon as we continue in lockdown. Do let us know what is working for you particularly if they are things we could share as helpful suggestions for all parents and carers next week ahead of the summer term.

There are a number of issues I would like to draw to your attention, that have relevance at the start of this two-week Easter holiday period:

Easter holiday expectations

My colleagues will not be setting work in the way they have over the last two weeks of the spring term, instead setting a holiday-type homework for students where appropriate, as they would per the usual schemes of learning. As well as having a break, after what has been quite an unsettling last few weeks, students could use the Easter holiday period to catch up on any work previously set they have yet to complete, complete these holiday homework tasks, read widely for pleasure and take the **5-day Kindness & Wellbeing Challenge** as outlined in the Student Bulletin. Given we are in lockdown, having some purpose to each day can only be a positive thing.

Our weekly Student Bulletin, published today, is always available to students through ePraise and the school website's Homepage as well as being sent to parents/carers with this communication. Please draw your son/daughter's attention to it and encourage them to participate; there are lots of activities you could do together.

Examination grading information from Ofqual

I hope you have had the chance to digest the information published on Friday by Ofqual (Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) and available on the school website's Homepage. Ofqual are the government agency who regulate qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

In essence, Ofqual have outlined the mechanism by which my colleagues will be asked to award grades for students in lieu of the cancelled summer examinations. As the documentation notes, my colleagues are best placed to judge the likely performance of our students had the courses been completed as normal, using their professional experience to evaluate the full range of evidence available. This work will begin shortly and involve providing a rank order of students within each grade, once grades have been awarded. The deadline for schools to submit this information to the Examination Boards will be no earlier than 29th May 2020.

In the interests of fairness to students, Examination Boards will compare and standardise the judgements submitted by all schools; this means that the grades of some or all students could be adjusted upwards or downwards in any school. For this reason, we will not be able to share our provisional grades, or rank orders, with students, parents or carers before the final results are issued by the Examination Boards so please do not contact any members of staff in this regard. Ofqual have undertaken to publish the results so that they are not delayed beyond the dates that were originally expected in August (A' Level: Thursday 13th August 2020; GCSE: Thursday 20th August 2020) and ideally will be issued a little earlier. You can be assured that our decisions regarding student grades will be robust, fair and objective in all cases and in line with all Ofqual requirements.

Student learning

Thank you for your understanding with the issues we have faced given the speed with which the school closed to the vast majority of students and the country subsequently went into lockdown. Our priority for the two weeks between the school closing and the Easter holidays was to ensure students had enough work to sustain them when learning from home.

Finding the right balance for all students at this time has not been easy within each subject class, particularly as we are not in frequent contact with the students as we would normally be. We have been clear in reiterating our expectation that what we have set allows for a variety of approaches to completing the work and there is no pressure to complete everything set, thus allowing you to take account of your son/daughter's circumstances, motivations and wellbeing at any given time. The most important thing is that students are looking after themselves as per the guidance given in the weekly Student Bulletin. Some days students might be able to complete more work than other days and this is fine. We are certainly mindful of not overwhelming the students but similarly wish to provide enough learning opportunities to engage them appropriately. Please reassure your son/daughter that they are doing the right thing by attempting the work within this ethos.

We are currently working on providing different teaching and learning opportunities for students remotely, a realistic way of giving feedback to students on key pieces of work set after the Easter holiday and meaningful virtual personal contact opportunities with students. All of these opportunities need to be practicable for the staff; you will be aware that most colleagues will teach upwards of 250 students and so the systems put in place will need thinking through carefully and time to organise to ensure they are effective. Therefore, for example, just as would be the case were the school open, marking all of the work set is clearly unmanageable; we are also aware that marking electronically could take colleagues longer than on paper. In addition, in all of this, I am very mindful of my colleagues' personal circumstances and subsequent capacity as we all adjust to these new ways of working. We appreciate your forbearance at this time.

You may have seen that from the first day of the Summer term, the BBC are offering daily lessons in English and Maths, as well as other core subjects, in an expanded version of their website and through the use of BBC iPlayer and the BBC Red Button. These will be available every day for all ages. There will also be advice for parents/carers on home learning and guides for students with SEND, to supplement information we are also providing.

Further information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zn9447h>

Keeping your child safe online

Given the amount of online support home learning relies upon, I thought it would be helpful to remind you of the support available to help keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links for parents and carers:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> - advice from the National Crime Agency (NCA)

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> – advice from the NSPCC

<https://www.internetmatters.org/> - a not-for-profit organisation working with a wide range of well-known partners

<https://parentinfo.org/> - a collaboration between the NCA / Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) and Parent Zone

Next week's Student Bulletin will be encouraging students to reflect upon their own practices, so this provides you with a week to review the materials first or even start the process with them, if you wish.

New Careers Advice Helpline:

As published earlier in the week, a helpline was launched on Wednesday 1st April to help young people through these testing times and to help answer any questions they may have on what is next for them. Qualified advisors run the helpline and they will be able to offer advice and support on a range of areas such as education and training choices; support with applications and support to access English and Maths.

Young people can discuss their next steps by calling 0300 666 3666 or emailing careersworcs@worcestershiresch.gov.uk

For more careers information they can also visit the Skills4Worcestershire website at: www.skills4worcestershiresch.co.uk/CareersWorcs

A reminder too that Mrs Beeton, our Head of Careers and IAG, is available to parents/carers and students on a Monday and Wednesday, as per her usual work pattern, on sab@pershore.worcs.sch.uk should you have any questions or need any advice.

Community support

May I once again say a huge thank you for the generosity of staff, former staff and friends of the school as their cash donations have allowed us to put together some Easter hampers for those families we know are in greatest need. May I also take the opportunity to remind you, as per my previous communications:

- to have your local Food Bank in your thoughts and support them where possible; they have been hugely grateful for all contributions made to date
- you may be a family, or know a family, who have become eligible for free school meals and it is possible to register for this with Worcestershire County Council using this link:

http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20062/schools/684/applying_for_free_school_meals.

In addition, I am very grateful to the Reverend Claire Lording and Pershore United Charities, for their offer of support for families who are finding the current situation particularly challenging. Please email your House Team, or the Sixth Form Centre, if there is anything we can do to help you and your children at the present time and we will endeavour to engage appropriate support.

Can I thank you once again for your efforts in helping our students to prevent the spread of the virus, by adhering to the lockdown guidance, and continue with their education from home and wish you a peaceful and safe Easter holiday period.

Yours faithfully



Phil Hanson
Headteacher