



Perschore High School

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



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Dear Parents / Carers,

I hope you have had a good Easter holiday and that you and your families remain safe and well. As the new term starts and in these strange circumstances, we are very pleased to welcome a new member of staff, Denis Campbell, as our Director of Learning Support and Inclusion (SENCo) who officially starts today.

I would like to update you on a number of issues, some of which are progress on issues previously raised and others are new to our communications.

Summer 2020 Examination cancellation

Results Days

The exams regulator, Ofqual, has confirmed that the GCE and GCSE Results days for this summer are as originally planned:

- 13th August 2020 – GCE (AS/A' Levels)
- 20th August 2020 – GCSE

Early Entrants – Year 10

Ofqual, has said it now thinks GCSE candidates in Year 10 or below should be able to receive grades this summer. Ofqual had previously said calculated grades would only be awarded to Year 11 students and above. This change in plan was revealed last Thursday as the regulator began a consultation into its awarding of exam grades.

It said that, having heard from schools, students and parents about the likely effect on younger students' progression if they did not receive a grade, they had decided to award calculated grades to younger candidates where they were due to sit the exam. This would largely be because 'their timetables and teaching arrangements for the next academic year assume they would have gained the qualification this summer and that further teaching in the subject would have therefore been unnecessary.'

The regulator said it is consulting on whether candidates in Year 10 or below should receive calculated grades this year but believes it should be 'permitted'. Should you wish to contribute, please follow the link below; awarding grades to Year 10 and below makes up one section within the consultation, which will end at 11.45pm on Wednesday 29 April. I have made an appropriate contribution on behalf of the school.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-seeks-views-on-gcse-and-a-level-grading-proposals-for-2020>

Student learning

The shutdown of schools because of the coronavirus emergency leaves us all in uncharted waters. This includes as parents/carers dealing with the challenge of how best to help children who are at home. It is important to emphasise that parents are not being asked to home-school children but rather supervise home learning. My colleagues will continue to provide learning programmes remotely. If you are unsure about any of the work provided, please check ePraise:

<https://www.epraise.co.uk/index.php?school=perschore>

At the start of the holiday, I asked parents/carers to let me know what was working at home, particularly if they were things we could share as helpful suggestions for all parents and carers. A few of the more frequent suggestions are noted below and I hope provide some reassurance for the approach you are taking:

Workspace and organisation: If possible, create a dedicated workspace. This helps distinguish between the space for learning and the areas for relaxation.

Set up a routine: The key here is to set up a routine that means getting up at the same times during the week and having things that are done in a regular order. It is important to factor in some free time without screens and when students are doing schoolwork, do some of your own work/jobs/chores alongside them. For some, a more rigid timetable might work and this could reflect their own school timetable as work and virtual lessons are being set trying to mirror this where possible.

Breakfast/active start: It is a good idea – after breakfast – to start the day with a light exercise session, for example, Joe Wicks, some stretches or yoga.

Chunk the work: Instead of watching over your child to keep them on task, begin each day with a conversation whilst viewing ePraise about the work to be completed and together agree regular slots for them to show you what has been achieved. In the conversation you can discuss any learning barriers and help remove them.

Social media: Whilst this can provide many distractions, it is also a way of connecting learning between friends via a learning 'group' to discuss answers, or to share related resources. Be alert to the dangers but do note the positive impact of students working together virtually.

Take regular breaks: Students should stop frequently and stay hydrated – they should keep a water bottle filled up. If weather permits, they should get fresh air by going outside (in the garden?) – they can come back to work later.

If it's not working, change it!: If your child is struggling with a task and you don't know how to help them, then don't be afraid to move them on. The task can be revisited later if needed, particularly if they have been able to secure any guidance from their teacher. Consider any wider support you could offer if this isn't possible. The BBC Bitesize website is providing daily lessons from today and these might be in the area in which the student is facing a barrier to their learning: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Stay positive: Do not underestimate the importance of the role you are playing. See this as an opportunity to spend time together. Be flexible; stop when you need to and adjust accordingly. You know your child better than anyone else, so do not feel like you are failing if you grant extended screen time, late bedtimes and lie-ins. As parents/carers, you may feel overwhelmed with the amount of subject specialist content involved and not know where to seek guidance. BBC Bitesize again is a good place to start.

From the school perspective, our remote learning programmes from today will encompass the following:

Teaching & Learning:

My colleagues are setting work on a lesson-by-lesson basis via ePraise (or ClassNotes or Teams if more appropriate) or a substantive task for completion, which is chunked with clear and frequent deadlines. We are aiming to set work equivalent to the timetabled hours missed.

Colleagues will also try to organise some periodic virtual learning opportunities through Microsoft Teams. Students will receive invitations to these sessions. These will give students the opportunity to engage in some more personalised teaching episodes, celebrate work previously completed, ask questions in relation to current and previous work set and raise issues with the teacher, through the 'Chat' function. All students should try to participate; any live session will always take place at the time of their usual timetabled lesson. However, for those students unable to access them live, all sessions will be recorded to make them available at another convenient time but these recordings will not include the chat function between the teacher and other students.

Accessing and using the required software:

Microsoft Teams is the **only** software that may be used by staff to undertake one-to-many teaching with students as it requires the use of a school account and to safeguard all parties the session will be recorded. All students should:

- participate in an online lesson from a public place in the home (i.e. not from their bedroom)
- if possible, blur the background or choose one of the generic backgrounds available
- ensure that their dress and language used during their communications should maintain some formality, as would be expected in a usual in-school lesson

Whilst I do not anticipate this will be the case, if a student engages in any inappropriate behaviours or communications during the sessions, the teacher will remove them and parents/carers will be notified.

In order to gain access to the Microsoft Office suite of products free of charge (which includes Teams):

Through a PC: Go to office.com and log in using the student's email address (e.g. 001234@pershire.worcs.sch.uk) and usual school password

Through an IOS/Android device: The Office suite, which includes Microsoft Teams, can be downloaded from office.com on up to six devices per student. Sign in using the school email address and password. IOS/Android apps for Teams can be downloaded from the relevant app stores and activated by signing in with School Email address and password.

Assessment & Feedback:

My colleagues will clearly identify certain pieces of work during the half term for which they will offer feedback. Teachers will indicate the platform through which they would like the work submitted (ePraise; ClassNotes; Teams). For Key Stage 3 this will only be through ePraise. All students have been sent some clear instructions today via ePraise on how to submit work for assessment via ePraise this way.

Our expectations:

Whilst all my colleagues are endeavouring to help our students maintain our new normality and some structure for the students in our care, I feel I must reiterate our ethos in this regard.

Firstly, in relation to our students. We are trying to find the right balance for our students with regard to their mental health and wellbeing and have been clear from the outset that you should support your son/daughter in navigating their way through our provision, as appropriate. 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. To help students (and parents/carers), colleagues will mark some of the tasks as 'essential' and students who are not able to complete all work set, should prioritise these tasks. Obviously should students feel able to complete all work set they should do so as it is of benefit to them.

We appreciate the efforts of the vast majority of students so far in engaging with the work set but we are also aware of a number of students who have yet to engage effectively with the provision offered. Whilst our focus will continue to be on our students' mental health and wellbeing, in the longer-term this will be negatively impacted where students do not engage as required. Falling behind their peers because of not trying to complete any work set will make the process of transitioning back to school even harder and ultimately affect the outcomes for qualifications they are currently working towards. I shall be asking all colleagues to complete an 'Engagement Survey' in the week beginning Monday 4th May where students who have not completed the 'essential' work as required will be identified. This message is also shared today within the Student Bulletin.

Secondly, in relation to my staff. We have tried to create realistic approaches that take account of my colleagues' ability to work from home, their potential personal circumstances during this lockdown and overall capacity given the numbers of students they teach within each timetable cycle. We appreciate your forbearance in this regard during this period of home learning should opportunities or responses not always be as hoped for.

Countywide & Local support

Here2Help is a countywide campaign and community response to provide help and support to vulnerable people and families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is led and co-ordinated by Worcestershire County Council, supported by a growing network of individuals, groups and organisations across the county.

It was launched at the start of the pandemic, initially to help vulnerable households who may be self-isolating to access food and medicine – particularly where they don't have available family, friends and neighbours to support them. Increasingly the campaign is also responding to the secondary impact of the pandemic, which in the context of children, young people and families includes issues where:

- The financial situation in a household has changed and parents are struggling to be able to feed their family;
- Parents might be struggling to cope without their usual support networks, to help look after children and keep them entertained (particularly where there may have already been challenging behaviour);
- The isolation and loneliness, accompanied by other issues, are bringing increasing stress and anxiety for children, young people and parents.

Here2Help is about making sure that anyone who is vulnerable during this pandemic is able access the help and support they need to prevent them from getting into crisis. There are three ways this is being done:

- Providing information, advice and resources to enable self-help wherever possible. On the Here2Help website (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help>) there are a growing number of resources to help families entertain and educate their children, support their mental health, maintain their wellbeing at home, for instance.
- People can request help by completing the short on-line form on the website or via a dedicated phone number, 01905 768053, which is open from 8am to 8pm seven days a week. As of 15th April, there had been 1,312 “requests for help” received by Here2Help. Each request which is received is picked up by a WCC or WCF member of staff who then works with the person requesting help to match them to the appropriate information and support. This might be related to access to food and medicine, help and support with childcare and looking after children, community help with money and wellbeing, for instance.
- People, groups and organisations can also offer help by completing a short on-line form on the website. As of 15th April, there had been 1,359 “offers of help”, which are being matched to the requests for help the campaign is receiving.

In addition, there is also the following local and countywide Covid-19 support:

Starting Well: <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/starting-well/>
SEND Local Offer: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/send

The campaign is evolving and developing all the time in response to national guidance and local demand. If there are emerging issues, ideas and resources not already being covered by Here2Help then please get in touch with WCF via commissioning@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Community support

I am delighted to be able to report that colleagues from our Technology Department, assisted by students who were in school last Thursday, have produced twenty face visors for use by those working at Worcester Royal Hospital. The request came from an ex-student of the school who is now a Senior Occupational Therapist at WRH.

I had obtained a file link providing details of a set of templates to create a laser cut version of the RC1 & RC2 Face Shield for use by at risk, front-line medical staff. Due to the scarcity of materials suitable to make an entire face shield in a single laser cut, they provided an adaptation of a 3D printed design, already accepted by our local GP alliance and the NHS in the UK as suitable.

Colleagues were able to convert these files for our in-school laser cutter. After a morning searching our stores for supplies and testing and trialling different materials, they created a set of files and cut out twenty headbands from polypropylene.

Some colleagues worked with the students who were in school assembling the visors, whilst others were busy sewing headbands to stop the visors rubbing on the ears of those using them.

Our plan is to make a least one set per week with the students in school, as they now know what is required and they were proud to be able to help. Future sets will be used to continue to supply WRH or local care homes.

I am particularly thankful to Neil Harding, Paul Bishop, Jane Burnham, Sandy Poulton and Sandie Roskelly for their assistance with this project and we are proud to have been able to do our bit.

Please do get in touch through office@persshore.worcs.sch.uk should you know of any other frontline establishments that might benefit from any of the face visors we can produce. Put the words 'Face Shield' in the subject box of the email.



The picture to the right is an example of the type of face visor produced.

I have attached the link below should other parents/carers be able to contribute to making the face shields and we can also share the laser cutter files we have created, if required.

<https://community.andmirrors.co.uk/t/covid-19-laser-cut-face-shield/168>

We appreciate all of your efforts as the new term begins. Apologies for the length of this communication, but I hope you have found some of the information here useful. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with relevant colleagues or any of the organisations highlighted or in the Student Bulletin as appropriate.

I hope you and your families remain safe and well.

Yours faithfully,

Phil Hanson
Headteacher