

12th February 2021

Updates for Parents & Carers

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that this letter finds you and your family well. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, our families, for all of your support this half term. Home learning isn't easy and the last 6 weeks have posed massive challenges for us all. You have done an amazing job of juggling work commitments, multiple children learning, supporting family members, caring for loved ones, running a household and supporting your children. You have done brilliantly!

Please try not to be worried by all of the negative press in the media about lost learning and gaps in knowledge. Your children are resilient and adaptable; encourage them to do their best and praise them when they do. We can't wait to welcome our students back into school, and when we do we will do absolutely everything that we can to help them to carry on with their learning and feel confident.

Half Term

The academy will be closed to all students from Monday 15th February until Friday 19th February. Live lessons will be paused over half term to allow students (and parents) to enjoy the half term break. Live lessons will restart on Monday 22nd February. Free School Meals will be provided through a Local Authority scheme over Half Term

Remote Learning – Live Lessons

Many thanks to all parents and carers who took the time to complete our recent Remote Learning survey. Your feedback is very important to us and we will be acting on some of your suggestions in order to improve our provision. We were overwhelmed with the positive comments and praise for our offer. Thank-you!

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to some commonly raised issues in order to give you a rationale for some of the decisions that we have made.

Many parents and carers commented that 5 hours a day is too long for students to cope with when they aren't in school. We are committed to at least 5 hours each day as this is mandated by the Department for Education. We encourage students to plan in short breaks after each lesson; lessons are 40-45 minutes each hour to allow this. Please be reassured that we are teaching the curriculum content as we would be when we are in school, in most subject areas. Teachers are following the exam specifications to ensure that students will be prepared for the future. Students in Key Stages 4 and 5 will likely have additional learning tasks to complete outside of the 5 hours each day, which again, is in line with what would happen if we were in school.

Respect • Ambition • Bravery

Student Wellbeing and PE lessons aren't live each week. The content of the Student Wellbeing curriculum is such that it is difficult to deliver remotely; it can often be sensitive subject matter. During the next half term, prerecorded lessons will be uploaded each week to ensure that students are accessing these subjects.

Parents and carers have asked us to use Zoom for our lessons instead of the Google Classrooms platform. You may have seen in the media recently the lack of security with the Zoom platform. Google Classroom provides much more robust systems for safeguarding and is one of the 2 preferred platforms of the DfE. We want to do all that we can to keep our students and staff as safe as possible.

If you are experiencing problems with wifi, please contact us as we can offer a number of free solutions for you.

If you have any issues or need support at any point, please contact your child's Head of Year as below in the first instance. They can offer support or can redirect you if necessary.

Year 7 _ Mr Kilvington

Year 8 – Ms Jones

Year 9 – Ms Eustace

Year 10 – Mrs Parker

Year 11 – Mrs Heptinstall

Years 12 & 13 – Mrs Harrap – Head of Sixth Form

We are aware that our Year 11 and Year 13 students are feeling anxious about what the rest of the year will look like and how the decisions made around exams will impact on their plans for next year. As you know from my previous letter, we are awaiting the government decisions based on the public consultations. I will write to you again once we have this information. We are now holding live weekly assemblies for Year 11 students with our Careers Advisor, Head of Year, Key Stage Leader and myself. It is hoped that this weekly contact will help to support our students at this difficult time. Year 13 students receive regular updates from Mrs Harrap our Head of Sixth Form and from the Sixth Form teaching team.

It is important that parents and carers are aware that, during this period of remote learning, as a school we will never request a 1:1 session with your child over Google Classrooms. Our live learning arrangements will always be for classes of students. This is for safeguarding reasons.

We wholeheartedly agree that nothing is better than face to face lessons with our students in school. We all join you in looking forward to the time when it is possible for that to happen again.

Assessment & Reporting Updates

Due to school closure, we have had to make changes to our current timetable of sending reports home to parents and carers. Years 7 and 8 were due to have reports sent out this half term. Reports for Years 7 and 8 will be sent out just before the Easter holidays to keep you informed of your child's progress. During the next half term, parents and carers of Year 9 students will receive information about the Options Process for this academic year.

Great Big Thanks

As we reach the end of another difficult term, we would like to give students, parents and carers the opportunity to send a message of thanks to individual members of staff. If you would like to send something, please email greatbigthanks@northernambition.org.uk by Monday 22nd February.

Reopening of Schools

The current situation continues to change rapidly. The Prime Minister confirmed on the 27th January that schools will not return until after February half-term and that the current attendance restrictions will remain in place until the 8th March at the earliest. We are very much looking forward to the time when it is safe for students to return to school. As soon as we have more information about how and when this will happen, we will share this with you. In the meantime, stay safe. We hope to see you very soon.

Yours faithfully



Miss L Proctor
Principal