



Friday 26th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

You are receiving a lot of correspondence into your inbox at the moment and this will continue into next week; thank you for bearing with us whilst we keep you up to date regarding mass testing, the return to school and - soon - the outcome of the exams consultation. This fortnight's Headteacher's update contains information about: mass testing; the exams consultation and when to expect correspondence; sixth form interviews; Y9 options; attendance; supporting students; and our LIFE curriculum, which is how we approach personal, social and health education at our school.

Mass testing reminder

I wrote to you yesterday with the school's plans for getting all students back to face-to-face education whilst also implementing a mass testing programme. Thank you for your understanding that we are attempting to do the best we can for your children in the circumstances, and no plan will be 100% perfect for everyone. As mentioned in the letter, you should expect two more communications next week: a booking form for your son/daughter's testing appointment; and a guide to the testing process to discuss at home should you wish.

Consultation regarding the awarding of grades for Y11 and Y13

As you will know, the consultation outcome has been released and the awarding of grades this summer has been firmly placed in the hands of schools. Results days have also been moved to the week commencing 9th August. We are currently digesting all of this information. Mrs Darbyshire, Deputy Headteacher, will write to parents next week with full details regarding the school's plans and timelines across the remainder of the time we have left before we are required to submit our grades.

Sixth form interviews

I am absolutely delighted to inform you all that we have a grand total of 110 applications to our sixth form next year. This is a staggering figure.

As previously stated in past communications to you all, the next step is for students to receive a supportive interview with a key member of staff here at Stokesley School. These are not 'pass or fail' interviews, but a means for students to ask any questions and to receive guidance on how to best achieve their goals of studying their preferred subjects at A-level. These interviews are vital for both the student and for us as a school, as we will use this information to begin timetabling the most expansive and bespoke curriculum we possibly can.

Mr Weedy will be producing a video message for Y11 students to watch on Monday which will detail what is required of them. It is vital that students check their emails regularly after this point, as this is how we will inform them of their interview date, time and venue. Interviews will be undertaken either by Google Meet or in person (safely), depending on





when your son/daughter's interview has been arranged; it will all be made clear in the email they receive next week. Once these interviews have been carried out, we will send out conditional offers to join our sixth form.

We did have the odd application arrive slightly past the deadline, and we would still be willing to accept ultra-late applications should there be any student who has changed their mind. If your son/daughter is definitely wanting to go elsewhere, please remember that we are here to support *all* of our students with their next steps, and so the offer is always there should they require any help or guidance from us.

Year 9 Options

You should have received an electronic copy of our options booklet before half term, along with a letter stating your son/daughter's pathway. Hopefully you've had a chance to have a look through the booklet to start thinking about which options your son/daughter would like to study in Y10 and 11. Our options website will be launched at 5pm on Wednesday 3rd March, here you'll be able to find out more about the options process, what the pathways mean and more about each subject by watching the videos linked to each page. There will also be instructions to show you how to enter the choices online. A link to the site will be sent out on Wednesday, and it will also be available via a link on our main school website.

Attendance

We have been absolutely delighted with the level of attendance to live lessons throughout the last six weeks. Attendance to all lessons has remained above 90% throughout, which is a superb effort given the difficulties some students have faced working from home. We look forward to this continuing right up to students' return. As you know, attendance above 96% is one of our key priorities during face-to-face education. Prior to school closures in January, our students had set an excellent standard for themselves with attendance at 95.1%. The Government has stressed that from 8th March school attendance is again compulsory for all children. Mr Burns, Assistant Headteacher, will be writing to all students next week to remind them how important attendance is, and how highly we value it. The link between attendance and achievement is unquestionable, but more than that, we absolutely believe in the importance of attending school for the benefits to mental and physical health that come from social interactions and physical activities. In short, we are really looking forward to seeing all students in person and we know from our interactions through google classroom, the vast majority of students are looking forward to coming back too. Schools are pretty dull places when they are not full of young people.

Supporting students over the coming weeks

We are aware that some of our students with additional needs may feel worried about the change in routine that comes with a return to school and with the introduction of asymptomatic testing. We would like to reassure all students that we are looking forward to seeing them soon and that familiar faces will be here, ready for when they return. Students should look out for contact from their named worker from the SEN team who'll be checking in with them next week. As always, for students without additional needs but who may also





have concerns, our Ethos Team is on-hand for support - please contact Mrs Wilkinson, Head of Pastoral Intervention, if your son/daughter would benefit from this.

LIFE update

It's been so exciting to introduce the new LIFE curriculum this year, and to see students engaging with their tutors and peers in LIFE lessons both in school and remotely. LIFE lessons are 20 minutes long, are discussion based, and sit under half termly themes. To date, these themes have been 'living in the wider world', 'philosophy, morals, and ethics', 'physical and emotional health and wellbeing' and - currently - 'the world of work' which is a scheme of learning focused on careers and career choices.

It's really important to us that we get the views of our students, and asking them questions about this aspect of their school experience means that we can work to shape it - where necessary - to better suit their needs. At the beginning of this week, therefore, our Y7 cohort completed a questionnaire through form time about their experience of the LIFE curriculum so far. Over 98% of students understand why these LIFE lessons are important to them, over 90% of them enjoy these lessons, and 93% of them believe that their LIFE lessons help them to understand how to keep physically and mentally healthy.

Perhaps our favourite part of the questionnaire, though, and the one that makes us the most proud of our wonderful students, is where they were asked to explain why they believe that these lessons are important as part of the curriculum at Stokesley school. We couldn't include all of the comments here, but some of the most insightful were:

- "If I have any problems they help me to understand how to solve them."
- "I learn things I wouldn't learn in a normal lesson which I need for when I go into the real world."
- "They teach us how to have a happier lifestyle."
- "They show people it's okay to feel ... and if you feel ...that there are always staff who can help you."
- "They answer lots of our questions about life."
- "They help us to make the right decisions."
- "They cheer us up."

Asking your son or daughter about the content of their LIFE lesson each week can be a great starting point for discussion at home: it's clear to us that they're engaging with the content and can see its value, and the more they get to have these discussions, the better. Thank you, as ever, for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett
Headteacher

