

Our Ref: SLT/FSC0801WSL

Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

It's been one of those weeks where you can hardly believe that we've made it to Friday. The tumultuous events around the world, including the mob storming the Capitol building in Washington, combined with the first stories emerging of the impact of Brexit and the mind-blowing number of Covid-19 cases and deaths, means we are all reeling a bit and feeling somewhat punch-drunk, even those of us who are aiming for a Dry January!

Things have moved at pace in the world of education and we have tried to respond quickly to provide the support students and families need. Within 24 hours of the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday, we had set up live lessons for the majority of our students and remote learning for all of our students. We had contacted all of our vulnerable children and families and made sure that as many of these would still be in school as possible, as this is the best and safest place for them. We ensured that those critical workers who had indicated before Christmas they would need a place for their children in school during lockdown were all offered places.

This in itself is an achievement but also in the background we are setting up for mass Covid-19 testing of staff and students. As parents and carers you will receive a letter about this later today, along with a consent form to allow your child(ren) to be tested. I would urge you to give this consent as quickly as possible. We will start testing staff and those students who are in school next week, checking our processes and procedures in readiness for when the bulk of our students return, hopefully next month. We are still looking for volunteers from the community to support - these can include ex-students who might not be able to return to university at the moment and have time on their hands – so please get in touch if you can offer us some of your time to support the testing process.

A year ago, my job was focused on teaching and learning, ensuring our students were safe, happy, confident, brilliantly-taught and successful. I could not have conceived that a year down the line my job would involve setting up Covid-19 testing centres, training staff and volunteers on how to take and process swabs, deciding which families meet the definition of critical worker families, organising the distribution of food parcels for eligible families and working out how to deal with a second year where there are no summer exams. How the world has changed!

Remote Learning

So far, we have lent out over 50 Chromebooks to families who are struggling to access work from home, as well as WiFi dongles or SIM cards for mobile phones that provide enough data for students to work from home. We don't want there to be any barriers to remote learning, so I will repeat that families without a laptop can borrow one from the school in the short term and then will be encouraged to take advantage of our Chromebook leasing scheme when it goes live this month. If you do not have a good internet connection at home or do not have broadband and your child is frustrated in their ability to complete their work because of this, please get in touch to tell us via admin.baysgarth@baysgarthschool.co.uk. We can order WiFi dongles direct from the government to support our students so please don't be afraid to ask.

You may well have read that students can access Google Classroom through their PlayStation and Xbox consoles as well. This isn't ideal as you need a keyboard and mouse to be able to do

work, but just to see the live lessons on a bigger screen might benefit some students. A simple search on the internet will show you how this can be done, or you can visit our social media pages to find out how (Facebook: @baysgarthschool, Instagram: @baysgarth.school and Twitter: @SchoolBaysgarth).

We have seen all of our Year 9, 10 and 11 students via assemblies and live lessons. Our Year 7 and 8 students will also receive a live assembly on Monday morning and will all be sent a link and a time for this. These are repeated here to support you as parents:

Year 7

8.30am: Cohort 1 (Students whose surname starts with A-G) - <https://meet.google.com/fic-ehgs-onw>

9.15am: Cohort 2 (Students whose surname starts with H-M) - <https://meet.google.com/wuj-kuwi-rqk>

10.00am: Cohort 3 (Students whose surname starts with N-Y) - <https://meet.google.com/tba-zknd-kvs>

Year 8

11.00am: Cohort 1 (Students whose surname starts with A-O) - <https://meet.google.com/tzf-knkv-wji>

11.30am: Cohort 2 (Students whose surname starts with P-Z) - <https://meet.google.com/jvn-mqfh-pmv>

During these assemblies, the students will be given guidance on the expectations of remote learning and the Flipped Learning. All students in Year 7 and 8 have been emailed the Google Classroom code and if they have any issues getting on, should contact Miss Driscoll directly.

You may also have read that the government has changed the guidance for remote learning overnight. Gavin Williamson announced to Parliament on Wednesday that schools were expected to provide 3-5 hours of remote learning each day, but last night this was amended to five hours. It also asks parents to report to Ofsted if they believe their school is failing to provide sufficient quality work. We don't believe that spending five hours per day in front of a screen is good for our students' physical and mental health, and so we will be issuing further guidance next week about how we encourage PE, reading and other learning activities at home to minimise this screen time. If you have any issues with remote learning please contact us directly and we will do our utmost to resolve them really quickly. If you think we are doing a good job and caring for our students and our community, feel free to let Ofsted know that you are pleased with the response of the school. [You can contact them here.](#)

School Day Timings

When I wrote to you last, I mentioned that we were hoping to obtain permission to amend our school day whilst we were on lockdown to support our staff with childcare issues and leave less 'dead' time in the day for students working remotely. I am pleased to confirm that the bus and taxi companies have agreed to this change, which will come into effect from **Monday 11th January**. Lessons and live lessons will now be at 8.30am, 9.30am and 10.45am, and the school day will finish at 2.15pm.

Year 11

Our students have been brilliant this week and have taken their live lessons seriously - attendance levels have been incredibly high. Yesterday's Music exam (yes, bizarrely exams are going ahead this week and next week!) went well with students appreciative of their revision day hosted by Ms Hallett. The Sport Science revision sessions have gone well in preparation for Monday's exam and for our students it is business as usual. Good luck to all of those students preparing to sit external exams next week!

With no exams to prepare for in the summer, our students now know that they have to impress their teachers who are going to be making the decisions on what grade they will achieve. We are still awaiting details on how grades will be calculated but, in the meantime, students know they are likely to achieve highly but only if they attend their lessons, complete their work to deadline and demonstrate to their teachers that they are capable of reaching their potential.

House Names

Sunday is the deadline for entries for our competition to name our five new Houses at Baysgarth. Mr McNaught has been overwhelmed with entries so far (over 150) but there is still time to add your ideas to the pile, especially as there is a £100 prize up for grabs! Let us know your five suggestions [here](#) by midnight on **Sunday 10th January!**

New Governor

Yesterday, I met with our new Parent Governor that you elected just before Christmas. Andrew Hall has two, soon to become three, children at the school and can't wait to contribute to improving the school. He is passionate about anti-bullying and already knows many of our students through his connections in the community. He's also entered the new House names competition so is excited about the prospect of winning that £100! We welcome Andrew to our Governing Body and look forward to working with him.

Good News

With so much information to give out at the moment it has been difficult to find the time to tell you about our amazing students and praise them for their achievements.

Before Christmas you will remember we took part in the national story-writing competition run by Pearson publishing, 'My Twist on a Tale - Everyday Heroes'. I'm very proud to announce that one of our Year 9 students, Hollie Birch, has won the regional award for her story. You can read her story, '[One Day Everything Went Dark](#)', [here](#). It deals with a really mature topic but is sensitively and beautifully done - completely deserving to beat off competition from thousands of other entries. Together with the other 15 regional winners across the country, Hollie's story will now be made into a book, professionally illustrated and published. Well done Hollie!

Another one of our Y9 students, Jay Holtby, continues to make waves in the world of junior karting. [You can watch him in action here](#). Jay finished second in this prestigious race that has previously been won by the likes of Lewis Hamilton and George Russell, so we have high hopes for his racing future!

If Jay makes it all the way to Formula 1, he may find some of his pit crew come from our Headway students. They completed their first Vocational Afternoon event this week, starting to learn those practical skills that will open doorways to employment and training in the future.



As always, thank you for your continued support. Take care and have a lovely weekend!

Yours faithfully

Richard Briggs
Head Teacher