

Our Ref: SLT/FSC-0902WSL

Tuesday 9th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I'm writing this letter on Monday 8th February, exactly a month before the expected start of the return to schools reopening. We still don't have any details on what this will look like, whether we will have a staggered start with exam groups prioritized, or whether everybody will come back at the same time. There have been no details released by the government but we do know they are in discussions with education leaders and trade unions, so we are hoping for answers soon and once we know them, we will let you know.

What we do know is that we have at least three more weeks of remote learning, and that this could be longer for some year groups. We also know that whilst as a nation we are making amazing progress at rolling out vaccinations, the whole process is still very fragile with very real risks that mutations and new variants could render certain vaccines as ineffective, leading to the need to start the whole vaccination programme again. Listening to the experts, opinions still differ wildly between those who see us almost back to normal by May and those who see disruption continuing for the rest of the year.

One thing we know for certain is that our children's mental and physical health is suffering. Remote learning adds its own stress and pressure and the isolation from friends and other family members, together with the limited opportunities to go outside and exercise, is leading to frustration, anger, anxiety and sometimes depression for many of our children.

For this reason, we have decided to pause our live lessons and remote learning work set from Wednesday. Thursday and Friday will be different days for our students. They will have the opportunity to spend a day completing House activities, talking directly with other students and teachers, completing a Scavenger Hunt and taking part in various Hobby Clubs and activities. This will be a fun-filled day, where the emphasis will be on checking in on their welfare and providing opportunities to communicate with others.

Students will also have time on these two days to catch up with all work set, ensuring all deadlines have been met and no work is outstanding. In this way, they can go into half term with no worries about school work, allowing them to relax and enjoy the break. As a school, we will have had the opportunity to check in on the welfare of every one of our students and target further support if we think it is needed. Further details of the plans for these days will be circulated to you imminently, but in outline the plan is for Ancholme and Treece to have the activities day on Thursday and Bardney and Newton to have their activities day on Friday.

We also recognise the pressure and toll this half term has placed on parents and families. We appreciate and acknowledge that you will have found yourselves having to play a much more active role in your child's education. Never before has the burden of responsibility between schools and parents been shared in this way.

More and more we've been hearing from exasperated parents, often juggling working from home with supervising their children, about the difficulties of keeping children focused and motivated to learn at home, the unfettered access to digital distractions (literally at their fingertips the entire day!) and the ultimate task of ensuring children willingly educate themselves using the same

device they use for gaming, social media, watching Netflix and much, much more. Not surprisingly, this is proving to be a huge challenge for parents.

As part of our commitment to supporting student wellbeing we would like to invite parents and carers to attend an online workshop; this session which will focus on:

- Motivating your child during home learning
- Keeping your child safe online
- Understanding and supporting your child's emotional health and wellbeing during lockdown

There will be four live workshop sessions; if you are unable to attend, a recording of the session will be made available to you, provided you have registered using the link below. Sessions times are:

- Thursday 11th February 1pm - 2pm
- Thursday 11th February 2pm - 3pm
- Friday 12th February 10am - 11am
- Friday 12th February 1pm - 2pm

Please [click here](#) to register your interest.

Chromebook Leasing

Thank you to all families for the interest that has been shown in this scheme. We have allocated nearly 100 Chromebooks so far to members of our community, prioritising our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families so that we achieve our aim that every family in our community has a Chromebook or laptop at home, and every Baysgarth student can work at home independently without having to borrow equipment from school.

We are now in a position where we can open up the scheme more widely, so that all families can now access the scheme. I've reattached the letter and FAQ document to this letter so all parents can view the portal and have the opportunity to order a Chromebook through this scheme. You have to be quick though, the portal closes on Sunday. Remember, if this isn't the right time for your family at the moment, we will have another round of leasing in the summer term when we will open the scheme up to our current students and the new Year 7 students, who will be joining us in September.

Safeguarding Your Children During Remote Learning

Our Chromebooks are set up with sophisticated web filtering to ensure students can browse safely online, but we know many of our students are still working on laptops and tablets that do not have these safeguards built in. Think U Know have put together a newsletter for parents and carers to share information and guidance around online safety at home. With children and young people accessing remote learning and online resources more and more, this leaflet supports families to ensure everyone is kept safe at all times. Click [here](#) to find out more.

Support for Families

Our Free School Meals voucher scheme is now fully up and running. We have made contact with our eligible families and vouchers have been issued to all parents and carers to cover the period 18th January to 12th February. The Local Authority is providing supermarket vouchers for our vulnerable families to see them through half term and these will be distributed via school this week. The voucher scheme will resume on Monday 22nd February and vouchers will be distributed to cover the two-week period until the date schools are expected to fully reopen, before 26th February.

The Barton Community Kitchen (BaCK) are offering a food service to local residents. Running since last October at Trinity Church, BaCK provides free meals for people in the community who might need some extra support. All meals are made freshly on the day by The Ropewalk catering team and are available for takeaway service. The menu for February can be found [here](#), and as you will see, the kitchen is open every day during the half term break. There are no questions asked, apart from 'what would you like to eat?'. BaCK is currently providing over 80 meals per day, but has the capacity to serve more, so if you or someone you know may benefit from this, please do!

Parents are reminded about the Winter Grant Funding, which provides extra support for families who need additional assistance. The team running the grant through Citizen's Advice on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council, have already provided assistance in the region of £33,000 to families since its launch in December. There has been an increase in families who are self-employed and may not qualify for Free School Meals etc, accessing this support, so we urge all families to utilise this service, irrespective of circumstances if you need support. Funding provided so far has supported families with food, utility bills, white goods, clothing and bedding.

To access the support, it is a very short online form and, once completed, families are reminded that they will receive a call back to confirm their needs. We have had a number of parents that have not answered their call back and thus may be missing out. The link is on our website which [you can find here](#).

We have secured 60 BT Wi-Fi voucher codes which give families FREE internet access for up to three devices per household from now until the end of July. You can check to find out if you live in an area where these Wi-Fi hotspot codes are available [here](#). These voucher codes will be distributed on a first come first served basis, with vulnerable families being given priority. Details of how to use your code and obtain free Wi-Fi are contained in the attached guide. If you would like a voucher code please email our Data Manager: nicolien.lawson@baysgarthschool.co.uk.

Protecting our Community

Baysgarth is very proud that we have a higher percentage of students in school than any other secondary school in North Lincolnshire. We know this is because we have worked really hard to make sure all of our vulnerable students are in school, despite the risks to our staff. We have also been able to offer more critical worker places to parents than any other school, such is our determination to support our community during these difficult times.

This is always a difficult balancing act - the more people we have on site, the higher the risk of a student or staff member contracting the virus or passing it on to someone in a vulnerable category. We need to ensure that we do everything in our power to keep our staff and students safe and we are very careful about following our infection control guidelines in school.

However, we have been made aware by the Police that some of our families are not taking enough care and following the laws and guidelines regarding Covid-19. Some parents have allowed students out to congregate with other children, disregarding the rules that are in place. This puts everybody at increased risk and, as a result, we have had to withdraw offers of places at Baysgarth to three of our critical worker families who haven't been following the rules outside of school. It's really important that we don't let our guard down as a community now, as it only increases the risk of society being locked down for longer.

Attendance

By the time we return to school in March, the majority of students at Baysgarth will have missed out on over 20 weeks of face to face learning since the start of the first lockdown in March 2020. It doesn't matter how diligent students and parents have been with remote learning, this is a huge loss which we have to catch up. These absences from school have been out of our hands but we do want to make sure that when we are back at school we keep absences to an absolute minimum. All of us, school staff, parents and children, have a duty to be in school every day, using every opportunity at our disposal to learn. We know there is a direct correlation between good attendance and good exam results, and we all have to play our part in making this a priority.

Over the coming weeks, parents whose children have a history of poor attendance, where there are no underlying health conditions, will be contacted to discuss their child's attendance rates. The school is currently increasing its capacity to be able to make more home visits when children are absent from school and are making plans to increase scrutiny on families, where their child's attendance has historically been unacceptable. I would like to remind parents that Covid-19 absences, where a child is forced to self-isolate due to them being a close contact of a positive case, do not count against your child's attendance record.

New Houses

The selection process for narrowing the House names has been completed by our Heads of Houses and Student Council. It was clear from the 166 entries that the community preferred a theme with local connections and the two options we have narrowed it down to both have these. Mr McNaught will be sending out details this week of how you can vote for the final choice of new House names.

The implementation of the new House system is something that we have been discussing for the last few weeks. We are painfully aware that our students need continuity rather than change at the moment and so we have decided to delay the implementation of the new House system for one year and introduce the new Houses from September 2022. The key reasons for this are:

- We know that our current Year 10 students will need lots of support for their final year in school and we want to do something special for them that involves support from core teachers in form time.
- The costs of the pandemic for Baysgarth are expected to be over £100,000 on already stretched budgets and we need to focus our resources on students rather than branding for the next year.
- On a practical level, our Hall is currently a Covid-19 testing station and to effectively implement the new House system we will need to have lots of assemblies and team-building activities which are just not possible in the current climate.
- The strong relationships that our students have with their tutors and their Learning Managers will be needed over the next year as we deal with the trauma caused by the pandemic - the last thing we all need at this time is more change and uncertainty.

The savings we make this year by not appointing an extra Learning Manager and Head of House will be put into adding capacity to our attendance team to ensure that we focus on our priority that as far as possible every student is in school every day.

Your Europe, Your Say 2021

You may remember that last year we were chosen as the United Kingdom's only representative to take part in the above conference at the European Parliament in Brussels. We had a fantastic team of students really excited and fully prepared for this experience of a lifetime and then Covid-19 hit and the whole event was postponed.

Well the event has been rescheduled and will now take place virtually on the 18th and 19th March. This is a huge conference involving schools from over 35 countries, focused on the theme of climate control, entitled 'Our Climate, Our Future'. The programme for the two days is attached.

The benefit of the conference being online is that now we can have up to 15 representatives from Baysgarth, rather than the four who had been picked to go to Brussels. So, students who have a genuine passion for our climate and would like to be involved in discussions, debates and workshops are invited to email Miss Melia or Megan Beevers, our Head Girl, to volunteer themselves for this conference. You will need to be articulate, confident and mature enough to speak with students from all over Europe, the majority of whom will be 17-18. Priority will be given to our Year 10 and 11 students. This is one of those opportunities that you can use for college, apprenticeship and university applications and should not be missed!

Staffing Update

One of our much-loved English teachers, Mrs Roberts, has been in hospital over the last week following a heart scare. We wish her a speedy recovery.

We have been busy recruiting new teachers to join our team next academic year. We are expecting an additional 50 students to be on roll from September so we have needed to recruit to our ever-growing school. Over the last week we have appointed Emma Stokes to join our Science team, Hannah Charlton to join our Art team and Ian Robinson and Elliot Stevenson to join our English team. This means we are fully staffed for September already, which is great news.

Parental Survey

Thank you to all of our parents who completed the survey we sent out last week. We had nearly 100 responses, which gives us a good representative sample. We'll analyse the results and share them with you after half term, but I just wanted to say a huge thanks to those parents who left additional comments. I know this takes extra time to complete and we have shared them with our staff as a huge boost to morale at the end of another exhausting half term. Here's just a small sample:

'You are all doing an amazing, AMAZING job at this time, the information provided by the school in a quickly changing environment is amazing, I can't fault you, and thank you to all of you it must be so hard to teach kids online.'

'I must say the way that the lessons are planned have been excellent and we have found them easy to follow and keep on track so we are very grateful for all of the hard work that is obviously going into the planning!'

'Baysgarth are doing a fantastic job during these difficult times. Pace of work is good; teacher support and live lessons are frequent and consistent. Communication is excellent; cannot fault the school at all. We appreciate all their efforts and I'm happy that my child thrives at this school.'

'Baysgarth blows me away, it does not just think of a child as part of the class, it sees every child as an individual. The communication from both ways (parent-staff, staff-parents) is fabulous and the way they have dealt with everything during the COVID crisis has been amazing. I really can't thank every staff member enough.'

'One of my children has Special Educational Needs and transition to secondary school has been a concern for a long time, to find out that his transition would be during a pandemic was an even bigger worry. Well I needn't have worried, the communication again was second to none, the transition days put in place despite the pandemic were amazing and at a time when I'm sure teachers were worried about themselves and their own families they put our vulnerable children first. My son's transition was smooth, without issues and he has settled into the discovery class better than I could have ever hoped for. Baysgarth for me, as a working parent of four children has been the best decision, the communication, the support, and the obvious desire of the teachers that I have encountered, to ensure that our children strive to be their best and achieve really is amazing.'

Thank you once again for your support. The strength of our community is overwhelming at times, both in school and out, and it makes me incredibly proud to be the Head Teacher of Baysgarth.

We wish all our families a safe and restful break. Take care!

Yours faithfully



Richard Briggs
Head Teacher

