

Dear Parents and Carers,

Face to Face support for Year 10 students

I hope you and your families are well.

As you will know, the Government recently announced that secondary schools should plan to provide some face to face support for Year 10 and Year 12 students during this term. They suggested the earliest starting date should be Monday 15th June. Last week the Government released further guidance, which states that:

Secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges are to begin offering some face-to-face support to year 10 and 12 pupils to supplement their remote education, which should remain their predominant mode of education during this term.

We believe that for the majority of students in Year 10, home learning has worked as well as we could have hoped. Teachers have been able to support students to both review and consolidate previous learning but also introduce new content. They have set tasks, which most students have been able to submit and teachers have then assessed and provided feedback. However, we believe that having some face to face support in school before the summer will be valuable for all students.

We also know that, depending on circumstances, some students have found lockdown more challenging and found it more difficult to engage as successfully with home learning and so may benefit from more face to face support in school than others.

Since the announcement, and the release of the further guidance, we have been working on a plan that provides this face to face support in a safe and meaningful manner. You will know that there are significant differences in the numbers of new Covid-19 infections and the rates of infection (the R number) across the country, with the North East of England continuing to be high. We are therefore taking a cautious approach about the numbers of students who will be in school at any one time, and about the timescale that we are going to adopt.

Week beginning 15th June: Targeted face to face support for individual students and very small groups of Year 10 students in school.

Week beginning 22nd June: Targeted face to face support for individual students and very small groups of Year 10 students in school. Face to face support for larger groups Year 12 students in school.

Weeks beginning 29th June and 6th July: Combination of larger groups and targeted face to face support for Year 10 students in school. Most Year 10 students will be in school for one day each week.

Week beginning 13th July: Targeted face to face support for individual students and very small groups of Year 10 students in school. Face to face support for larger groups Year 12 students in school.

As you may be aware, different schools are following very different approaches for Year 10 and Year 12 face to face support depending on what form and how successful their home learning has been up to now. I believe that what we are offering will provide some meaningful time in school for all students while prioritising those who we feel will benefit the most.

We are currently finalising arrangements for the main two weeks of Year 10 students being in school. We will share these arrangements and the associated Risk Assessment that are required to ensure the safety of students and staff with you next week.

Following this letter, we will send you a survey that will ask you to indicate whether, at this stage, you child is likely to attend their sessions in school during the weeks of 29th June and 13th July. We will also contact you directly if we feel that your child would particularly benefit from more time in school.

2021 Examinations

I know that you and your children will be concerned about the GCSE exams in 2021. As a parent of a Year 10 student who will be taking her GCSEs next year, I completely appreciate this concern. I, and other Headteachers, will lobby the Department for Education, Ofqual, and the exam boards to provide some guidance on how these exams will be affected or altered because of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Even if they do not adapt the nature and content of the exams, the exam boards use a mechanism referred to as norm referencing. This means the same proportion of grades are given out each year. Therefore, if students do less well nationally, which is likely given this break in their studies, then the marks for each grade boundary will come down to reflect this situation. Therefore, it is important students continue to engage with their home learning to ensure they are in the strongest position possible when we return to school. I hope this information provides some reassurance.

Regards

Mr Watson