

15th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Update from Highgate Wood School

I hope that you are all continuing to do well and manage in the current period of lockdown. I know that things continue to be challenging for everybody, but I also hope that you are taking the opportunity to enjoy some family time as well.

This is the fifth of our weekly update letters. I hope that you are continuing to find them informative and useful. What I want to make sure is that you as parents and carers always feel informed about

1. What is happening at HWS – particularly in regards to our educational provision for your children
2. What is on the horizon in terms of strategic planning for the months ahead or communicating any changes
3. The School's response to any government announcements regarding COVID-19 and how these may affect your children – this is the big focus of this week's letter

In addition to this weekly letter, I hope that you are also accessing the other ways in which we are regularly communicating updates via the School's website www.hws.haringey.sch.uk and the School's Twitter account www.twitter.com/highgatewood.

Regular Contact Home

I wrote to you last Friday about our commitment to ensuring that every student at HWS in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 would receive a call home once a week to check in and see how things are going during this period and also to see how they are coping with the online work. These calls started on Monday. I hope that you and your children found them supportive and helpful. I would be delighted to hear some feedback from parents and carers about the impact of these catch up calls. Please feel free to e-mail me your thoughts on admin@hws.haringey.sch.uk.

Return to School Planning – an Update

As you will now be aware, the government announced last Sunday that secondary schools are being encouraged to provide year 10 and year 12 students with some face-to-face contact with their teachers between 1st June and the end of the academic year. Importantly, that this will only happen "provided that the 5 key tests set by the government" are met. It is our understanding and our expectation that the government has no current plans for students in years 7, 8 or 9 to return to school before the summer break.

While the announcement has been contentious and has sparked a lot of debate in the media, social media, and from teaching unions and there are many differing opinions, it is the view of the leadership of the school that we do need to plan for providing this opportunity. Our principal consideration in all our planning has been (as you can imagine) the health and wellbeing of our children, our families and our staff team.

Highgate Wood School Student Council supports individual action to address the issues of Climate Change and promotes the United Nations top 10 recommendations.



5-minute showers



Drive less



Lights off



Local produce



Recycle



Meat-free meals



Zero-waste fashion



Unplug



Refill and reuse



Bring your own bag

All preparations for any potential reopening of the school to year 10s and year 12s will include all staff (and their union representatives) and members of the Governing Body. We have also been in regular dialogue with other headteachers in the local area and Haringey local authority to share our thinking on the matter.

Earlier this week we met as a group of Haringey secondary headteachers. We are keen to work together on providing the best possible provision for the children of Haringey, whilst ensuring that safety is the top priority. In doing so we are beginning to pull together a few guiding principles that all schools will work to.

Thus far, we have agreed two principles:

1. **Focus on high quality remote learning** – This is the main focus across all the schools, as this will form the cornerstone of the provision for all students in all year groups. Any provision in school for year 10 and year 12 students will supplement the online remote learning that is happening
2. **A commitment to a staggered start to year 10 and year 12 student attendance** – There is a view from the secondary headteachers that student safety whilst travelling to and from school could be a challenge. We have agreed that by staggering when our provision for year 10s and 12s will start across the schools we will reduce the pressure on transport and travel

These are quite broad principles thus far, and so as you can imagine, this does not mean that all schools will be doing the exact same thing. This will very much depend on the individual context of each school. However, in terms of the detail of what schools are working on, I am confident that some alignment will be achieved for the benefit of all Haringey students, families and staff members. That is something that I am really pleased about. I will share more details of the thinking at HWS in next Friday's letter.

We are fully aware that as and when our students do return, their experience of school will be very different to normal. This is unfortunately inevitable owing to all the restrictions that will have to be implemented in order to keep them safe.

We know that our students and their families will have had very different experiences during lockdown. A few students have been in school for the last couple of months, and for them school will have been a very different place. The majority of our students will have been at home and each of them will have had their own experiences. It will take time for them to re-establish and re-learn the expectations of school life, behaviour and learning.

Returning to school will not just be about the academic side of school life. We know that we will need to allow our students time to re-build relationships and get used to being in school again, this will not happen overnight.

The government has now issued guidance for schools to support the planning for opening again, there are some points that I wish to highlight with you all that we have thought about at HWS:

- There will be significantly reduced numbers of students in school at any one time to allow for social distancing measures to be implemented
- We will be redesigning classrooms so children have maximum space to spread out.
- There will be staggered arrival and departure times for different groups of students
- There will be regular scheduled handwashing throughout the day
- Cleaning of the school site will take place throughout the day.
- Students will only be in contact with other students within their groups and we will minimise the movement around the school
- Handling and sharing of resources will be kept to a minimum where possible

Whilst we will be implementing systems to support the children and adults regarding social distancing, we know that some students may find it very difficult– especially in the playground. I understand that many of you may feel anxious about sending your children back to school, but please be assured, we will do our utmost to make sure that they are safe, and that risks are minimised.

For some of you, a return to school may not be an option - especially if there is a family member who has a pre-existing medical condition. The government has made it clear that parents will not be penalised if they choose to keep their children at home at this time. We will be sending out a survey shortly to parents and carers of year 10 and 12 students asking you about your thoughts and your intentions regarding the return of your children to school. This will come to you via e-mail at the beginning of the coming week.

Finally, please note that any reopening of the school will be phased and will likely be done slowly over time: please do not assume that students will be returning to school on 1st June. For our year 10s and year 12s that will definitely not be the case.

Years 7, 8 and 9 Students

I recognise that most of this letter is focused on the arrangements for years 10 and 12. As mentioned before, the expectation is that students in years 7 to 9 (with the exception of vulnerable students) will remain at home until the summer holidays. The focus for these students will remain solely the online distance learning that has been taking place.

We feel that overall, this has been going well. However, we know through our reviews and via feedback from students and parents that there are some improvements that we can make to ensure that the remote learning experience of our students is the best that it can be. We have discussed

- Managing the amount of work that students are being set and spreading out the deadlines more helpfully
- Increasing the amount of teacher direction for work that has been set to allow all students to access the work successfully
- Providing more opportunities for teachers to be available for students to discuss the work – please note, this is not the same as every student receiving individual feedback as this is not practical in these times

I would also like to stress to parents of our year 7s, 8s and 9s that all work that we set is equally important, so we would not want students and parents to priorities certain subjects over others. We want to keep our curriculum offer broad and balanced. Having said this, if some work is too difficult or incomplete, please do not allow your child to get too worried about this. We will help everyone catch up once your child is back in school.

Alongside the above, Small School for the children of key workers and our vulnerable children will continue to operate every day alongside provision for years 10 and 12. However, these will remain separate provisions

Year 9 Options Process

Year 9 students and their parents will be eagerly the outcome of the options process to find out which GCSEs they will be studying next year. This process is very much on track (despite the current school closure). We will be communicating the outcome to families in July at the same time we do every year. If you have any queries about this, please contact Acting Assistant Head Ms S. Chaudhri (sci@hws.haringey.sch.uk).

Mental Health and Well-Being

We know that this lock down period is a very challenging one (as we have said a number of times). With that in mind, I would like to again share the information below from Haringey local authority in the services that are available to provide support for anyone who needs it.

The main information can be found here. <https://bit.ly/hwsmh>

1. Mental Health Support Team Telephone Support Line – Open to all Haringey Schools 9am-3pm Monday-Friday. We are here to listen and support you with your worries and emotions. For: Children/ young people, parents/ carers, school staff. **Tel: 0208 702 6035**
Beh-tr.camhstrailblazerinbox@nhs.net
2. Haringey CHOICES - for young people up to the age of 17 years and their families.
Haringey Choices: www.haringeychoices.org/
Contact page: www.haringeychoices.org/contact-us
Tel: **020 8702 3405**
3. Kooth – online counselling support 11 – 25 years. Sign up for free at www.kooth.com

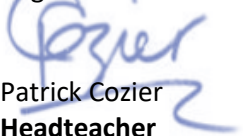
... And Finally

I would like to thank all of our families for their continued support!

Have a great weekend.

Take care and stay safe!

Regards



Patrick Cozier
Headteacher