

1st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Update from Highgate Wood School

It feels like literally moments ago that I wrote to you last week. The experiencing of time during this lockdown period is an odd one – it feels strange without the usual routines and signposts. I am sure it is true for all of you too. Nevertheless, I hope that you are all managing to make the best of things and that you are staying healthy and safe.

This is the third of our weekly update letters. I hope that you are finding them useful. This week I include a number of updates for parents and carers in the letter below. I think it is important that you get a sense of how much work continues to be done at HWS, not just in terms of the setting of work for our students, but also with our plans for moving forward as and when things get back to normal.

Re-Opening of Schools

It is talked about in the news almost every day, with various opinions being expressed. The truth is we do not know when. We do not know in what form. We do not know how much individual control we will have. We do not know what our staffing levels will be like. We do not know how many students will come in. However, what we do know is that at some point, schools will need to re-open, and we need to plan for this... somehow! The challenge is that there are more questions than answers right now. This is something that all schools are facing.

The most common view circulating at the present time is that we will return this side of the summer holiday – probably on or after 1st June. However, this is not in any way certain. As a school, we are planning with the premise that we will be back in a few weeks. The government have suggested that it is likely to be a 'phased' return, although it is not clear what that means. We can only guess at this point, but there are suggestions that the government is looking to prioritise particular year groups (possibly years 6, 10 and 12).

It is likely that when schools do return, some form of social distancing will still be in place. This is a very tricky issue to overcome for most schools. My view is that schools and children were not built and made for social distancing. To make this work it is likely that we would have to significantly limit the number of students on site. The government may determine which student cohorts should be in attendance (as mentioned above), but it is also possible that they could leave this for schools to decide. We are thinking through what our priority would be should this be the case, but have not made that decision yet. However, we do know that to maintain social distancing we would need to teach smaller groups, stagger lesson changeover times and also stagger break and lunch times, amongst other things.

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



We are also looking at what we need to do to get a sense of how well our students have been doing with the home learning. We would anticipate that some students will have done better than others. We will need to decide what we do about supporting any students that have fallen behind during this period.

Lastly, in addition to the need to socially distancing, we will also make sure that we are on top of things like deep cleaning prior to opening, ensuring sufficient hand washing facilities, maintain the usual hygiene messages, etc. Once we know more and are able to more specially share our plans with you, we will do so.

Year 10 – Home Learning Concerns

Some year 10 parents and carers have communicated with us, following the recent letter to year 10, regarding the work expectations for year 10 students – letting us know that in their circumstances these expectations are going to be very difficult or impossible.

I want to emphasise that these are maximum expectations, for when circumstances are as ideal as possible given the current situation. Many families will find that the conditions for working at home are far from ideal and our message is that parents and students can only do what they can do. Also, please be reassured that we do not expect that students will necessarily understand all the topics covered and work done at this stage. Departments have reorganised their curriculum so that gaps will be covered when school returns with further explanations and help. Students should do their best but not get stressed when they do not understand a concept at this stage. If you do have any queries about this issue as a year 10 parent or carer, please contact Assistant Headteacher Mr A. Hartley (aha@hws.haringey.sch.uk).

Year 11 – Transition to A Level Booklets

We know that this is a strange time for our year 11s given the cancellation of the exams. Our view is that this is a good opportunity for our year 11s to start focusing on what they will be doing in September at post 16. With that in mind, we have made available to our students a series of Transition to A level Booklets to support them with this process. We are asking year 11s to think about the subjects that they want to study at A Level, find the appropriate booklets and work through them. We believe that this will give our students excellent preparation for the challenges of starting A Level. These booklets can be found at <https://bit.ly/hwspost16> If you have any queries about this, please contact Director of Sixth Form Ms L. Pinnick (lpi@hws.haringey.sch.uk).

Jack Petchey Community Award – We Need Your Help!

We are looking for nominations for a special Jack Petchey Community Award (worth £50) for a young member of the HWS community (aged 11 to 25) who has gone above and beyond in their contribution to the community during this challenging time.

If you have any suggestions please submit them online here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/hwsjpa>. We are really keen to find out what amazing things are students have been up to and look forward to reading about their achievements. If you have any queries about this please contact Assistant Headteacher Mr T. Ashman (tas@hws.haringey.sch.uk).

Parent Governor Vacancies

Currently we have four vacancies for parent governors on the governing body. Your voice as a parent is very important to our school and it is a priority for us that the governing body has a good representation of parents from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. With this in mind, we would particularly encourage nominations from parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Notwithstanding this, the key quality from any parent who wishes to join the governing body remains a strong commitment to HWS and a willingness to invest the time and energy to the governing among its membership. For more information and deadlines, please contact my PA Mrs K. Ozturk (koz@hws.haringey.sch.uk).

Hardship Fund

You will recall that in the letter that I sent to you last Friday, I mentioned our hardship fund. I would like to remind you that if you are struggling or know a family that is, please contact Ms Spence (dbs@hws.haringey.sch.uk) who will be able to discuss the issue with you and let you know if the situation is eligible for support from our fund.

As mentioned previously, we are aware of the good work being done by the Muswell Hill Food Bank. They are helping many families across the borough. However, they would also welcome some support so if you are in a position to make a donation, I would again ask that you contact Ms Spence on the e-mail address above and she will give you the details.

In addition to the Muswell Hill Food Bank, Holy Trinity Food Bank serves those in need in the N4, N8 and N6 areas. Contact can be made through <http://www.holytrinityfoodbank.org>. Messages can be sent to the "advice" email there, or by a text to 07469 952112. In addition, if you would like help with contacting the food bank contact Assistant Head Ms D. Spence (dbs@hws.haringey.sch.uk) who can do this on your behalf.

Have a great weekend. Take care and stay safe!

Regards



Patrick Cozier

Headteacher