

12<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents / Carers,

As we reach the end of this half term, I would like to take a moment to reflect on what the students and staff of Neston High School have already achieved. Once more with very little notice, the students learnt they were unable to return to school after Christmas. However due to their resilience, most of our young people immediately embraced the new way of learning and engaged well with my colleagues to continue with their studies remotely. As always, may I ask you to congratulate your child on their attitude and approach to their studies and not only focus on their final pieces of work. As a school that continues to put character and personal development at the heart of its thinking, we know that we need to recognise and celebrate the positives when at all possible. By doing this we teach our young people that through this time they have also developed or enhanced skills and attributes that will hold them in good stead for thriving in an ever-changing world.

Through the welfare checks home my colleagues have reported that many students, although missing school and time with their friends, have been consistently pragmatic in their outlook and have remained connected with the school community. As I have said before, as a parent with two teenage children, I can also fully appreciate the difficulties many of you are facing in your personal and professional circumstances and I would like to again thank you for the support you have shown to your children who have truly done you proud.

We are all eager to see our young people back with us within the school building but as I write, we are waiting further information about the possibility of a return for more students. At this stage we are only aware that at the earliest this will be after 8<sup>th</sup> March. As always, once we receive further guidance, we will carefully consider this return with the safety of students and staff being paramount in any planning and will communicate this with you as soon as possible.

School has remained open for our critical worker and vulnerable students and I would like to take a moment to congratulate this cohort of learners who have attended on a daily basis and followed an equivalent structure to lessons as those who have been working remotely. Their maturity and understanding of the current situation has allowed their family members to remain on the frontline which clearly benefits all of us who are in the local and regional community. This daily programme will re-commence on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February post the half term break. Thank you to all parents who continue to communicate and confirm their places in advance.

### Remote Learning

Thank you to all students who have completed the remote learning survey. This has given us some valuable feedback as we continue to review and adjust the remote learning opportunities for all students. Further information about the survey results and adaptations will be available after half term after we have received clarification of how and when students will either return into school or continue to work off-site. If appropriate, to support students, wellbeing time will continue to be built into the plans for next half term, as indications have been that this has been beneficial to students and their families. Many took the opportunity to catch up at their own pace, revise, have time away from screens and take part in some alternative activities. Further information will be communicated as soon as possible. We look forward to welcoming back students remotely on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

## Year 9 Options

Further information has already been sent directly to year 9 parents. Thank you to all families who have taken the time to engage with the virtual options event, option booklets and sought support when needed. Course videos and information are still available online. [Y9 website link](#) If you require any further support please contact Mrs Bowden, Y9 RSL. The deadline for making options choices is Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. [Year 9 Options Link](#)

## Children Mental Health Week photography competition

Don't forget the competition is still open until Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February – a perfect activity to complete in half term! Students are invited to take a photograph which represents one or more words from our school ethos of "Explore, Dream, Discover". It can be as simple as an image from a local area walk, skill learnt in lockdown or a lockdown activity such as a baking or craft creation. Students can use any electronic device to upload an image and email [exploredreamdiscover@nestonhigh.com](mailto:exploredreamdiscover@nestonhigh.com). It is important that this is emailed from student school accounts. Prizes available for the top 3 entries in each year group.

## Exam Series 2021

The Ofqual consultation period about how exam grades will be awarded this year ended on 29<sup>th</sup> January. Thank you to all those who took the opportunity to express their opinion via the online portal. Presently, we do not have any further detail or guidance to pass onto our students or families. We have been informed by a number of exam boards that they hope to have information available from week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> February. We fully empathise and sympathise on how the uncertainty is making those affected feel, however please be reassured that once the parameters and protocols are set my colleagues and I will work with you to ensure that every child receives the appropriate guidance and support for them to attain the outcomes they deserve.

## Free School Meal Voucher Scheme

The supermarket voucher scheme for families entitled to Free School Meals will continue after half term. If your financial circumstances have changed, you can find full details of eligibility criteria along with a simple application form on the Cheshire West and Chester website. You are able to register via this link [FSM application](#) if you think you may be entitled and have not yet registered.

## Local Authority welfare support for families

The Government have allocated additional funds to local authorities to support residents who are facing financial difficulties through a COVID winter grant scheme. Funds can be used to support families with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials. Please see links below for further information available from Cheshire West & Chester and Wirral councils.

[Cheshire West & Chester Winter Grant Scheme](#)

[Wirral Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#)

### Half Term Monday 15<sup>th</sup> – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February

I wish you all a safe and restful half term. Please continue to follow the national lockdown guidance and not mix with other people outside of your household (or support bubble). [National Lockdown Guidance](#). This has clearly been another complex term for everyone and I will be advising my colleagues to take some time out and recharge for the next stage of the journey ahead. Please can I encourage you to also allow your child to come away from the intensity of remote learning and also recharge in preparation for the next half term.

With kind regards

K Simpson  
Headteacher