



WALTON HIGH

Leading Learning

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Executive Principal: Michelle Currie
Principal: Sharon Alexander
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Chair of Governors: Renu Elston
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Dear Parents

Covid-19: Update 11

I hope you and your family are well and have managed to have some time to relax and enjoy the intermittent fine weather.

After the two week break, Walton High's staff are focusing on re-engaging students with their learning and checking on their wellbeing.

A number of announcements have been made in the last few days that I would like to share, together with an update on our planning for the summer term.

GCSE, A Level and Vocational qualifications

The body responsible for qualifications in England, Ofqual, has announced the arrangements for awarding this year's technical and vocational qualifications. Information for parents and students can be found using the link belowⁱ. Ofqual has also launched a consultation on the arrangements they intend to put in place for awarding grades this summerⁱⁱ. This consultation closes on 29 April 2020.

The Department for Education has announced that students will receive their calculated grades on the scheduled results day for Post-16 and Key Stage 4 qualifications, i.e. 13 August and 20 August respectively.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key Stage 4 options

Thank you to all the Year 8 students who completed and returned their preference form by the deadline. Unfortunately, there were over 60 students who did not return their forms and staff are in the process of contacting these students. Once we have all the forms returned, these will then be processed.

Ensuring that the maximum number of students receive their first choice of subject in each option block is a complex process and takes some time to complete. However, we hope to have this done, and be in a position to let students know which subjects they will be studying in Key Stage 4, by the end of June.

Whilst we will do our best to enable all students to study their chosen subjects, some students may be allocated their reserve choice. Should this be the case, it will be discussed with students and parents beforehand.

Free School Meals

The Government's voucher scheme has encountered a difficult start with the entire system crashing and then it taking two weeks for the problem to be resolved. Unfortunately, this meant that parents of children entitled to free school meals did not receive their vouchers over the Easter break. Despite the DfE knowing the number of children entitled to free school meals, the company contracted to run the scheme on their behalf, Edenred, was surprised by the "unprecedented demand"!

Further information about the voucher scheme can be found on Edenred's website.^{iv}

The COVID-19 Update 7 letter gives advice to parents on how to apply for Free School Meals for their child(ren) if they think they may now be entitled to this support.^v

Digital divide

You may have heard on the news yesterday that the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, said that the Government recognises the difficulties some families face in accessing a PC/tablet and broadband at home and the extent to which this disadvantages some young people. He announced that the Government was planning to provide a limited number of laptops and 4G routers for students in Year 10 entitled to free school meals^{vi} and some students identified as being vulnerable. Details are to be announced on Wednesday this week but as this is such a limited offer it does little to address this significant issue.

As it is likely to take some time for the Government to procure and distribute the equipment, and because it falls well short of the need, Walton High will continue with the arrangements it already had in place for addressing this issue. Therefore, starting from tomorrow, PCs will be delivered to students who do not have access to one at home.

As we are still awaiting delivery of the 4G dongles for internet access, those students requiring this level of support will receive their PCs after these have arrived as the Technical Services Team need to check everything works before they are delivered.

If your family has access to the internet and would benefit from an additional PC in the home because children are having to share a device, please let us know if you are interested in borrowing a school PC by emailing feedback@mket.org.uk.

Personal Protective Equipment donations

Along with other schools in Milton Keynes, Walton High has donated PPE equipment to hospitals and care homes.

Mrs Bowers, Head of Art, Design and Technology, has also spent time over the holiday using the school's laser cutter to manufacture ear relievers. These are devices that prevent pressure ulcers developing as a result of wearing surgical masks for long periods. The ear relievers have been delivered to two local hospitals.

When are schools reopening?

School are not privy to any special insight into the Government's thinking than other members of the public and Minister continue to state they will be "guided by the science".

At the moment, we know that schools will remain closed to all students for at least the next three weeks but will continue to provide childcare for the children of critical workers and those considered to be vulnerable.

However, as schools will reopen before a vaccine has been developed for COVID-19, there will be a need to ensure as much social distancing as possible for the foreseeable future. As you can imagine, this is a challenge in a school with nearly 1,500 students plus 150 staff on each campus! However, social distancing, good personal hygiene and symptomatic people isolating will continue to be crucial to the health and safety of staff, students and their families.

The senior team are actively working on what this might look like so we can ensure any adjustments are made in good time. We will keep parents and students informed of any changes to our usual working practices as your support will be crucial to their success.

Reporting symptoms of coronavirus

We have been asked to pass on the following message on behalf of the NHS:

People showing symptoms of coronavirus should complete a [status checker](#) and answer a short series of questions to tell the NHS about their experience. [Status checker](#) users are clearly told at the beginning and the end of the survey that it's not a triage or clinical advice tool, and that they should visit 111 online for medical advice.

It appears that this may be a way of tracking the possible spread of the virus in the absence of testing in the community. As stated in the message, it is not a clinical advice tool so people who are unwell and need medical support should still visit 111 online.

Stay at home and help save lives

We continue to urge everyone to have consideration for the wellbeing of others, and support those working in the NHS, by abiding by the “stay at home” rule. We appreciate that this is a challenge for many families and are doing our best to support you at this difficult time.

Stay in, keep your distance, wash your hands, don't touch your face and look after each other!

Best wishes



Michelle Currie
Executive Principal

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awarding-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-this-summer>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-seeks-views-on-gcse-and-a-level-grading-proposals-for-2020>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

^{iv} <https://www.edenred.co.uk/reward-recipient/Free-School-Meal-Vouchers/>

^v https://www.waltonhigh.org.uk/images/letters/COVID-19_update_2020_03_23.pdf

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>