

19th March 2020

Dear Parent,

On the evening of 18th March 2020, it was announced that all schools are to close until further notice and that GCSE and A-Level exams and assessments will be cancelled this year. Whilst we hope to reopen the school on 14th April 2020, it seems increasingly likely that schools across the country will be closed for a much longer period but we will continue to keep you up to date as promised.

I would like to provide you with some further clarity about our circumstances at The Lakes School, to let you know the steps we are taking to support students and families and to clarify how Cumbria County Council are responding to some of the challenges being faced by children and families.

How is the current situation affecting The Lakes School?

In recent days, we have seen an increase in the number of staff who need to socially distance themselves in line with the guidance issued by the government. This has inevitably had an impact on our ability to provide education and care for our students which ultimately led us to taking the decision to close the school until further notice from 18th March 2020.

On a daily basis, an increasing number of staff are unable to come in to school because of the guidance around social distancing. This may be because of family members being vulnerable or presenting with symptoms or because they need to stay at home to look after their children who are unable to go to school. We expect to see a further increase in the number of staff who need to stay at home.

The announcement to close schools will also now reduce the number of staff who are present in school. Whilst staff who are at home will do their best to continue supporting your child, it is inevitable that our staff will find this a challenge without the resources and ICT infrastructure that we are able to rely on in school.

I would therefore like to thank you again for your patience and understanding at this time. We will continue to prepare subject specific content and ideas to support all of our students and I will write to all parents again before the weekend with a full update about how you and your child can access learning materials. Essentially, we are taking steps to help you support your child for as long a period as possible without needing to rely on school staff as they may not be able to provide specific support to their students for an extended period of time.

How are Cumbria County Council responding to the announcement about keeping schools open for vulnerable children and children of frontline services staff?

The announcement from the government on Wednesday was that children of frontline workers and vulnerable children will remain in school. This announcement was quite misleading as this does not apply to all schools. CCC are currently assessing demand across all communities. We have emailed all parents with a letter from Dan Barton asking the parents of frontline workers to complete an online survey so that the CCC task group can assess the level of need in the local area. Please complete this survey if this applies to you. We have pasted the link below for your reference.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BMQHDGY>

Once this information has been collated, the CCC task group will look to make provision available in the area of need. CCC are also identifying the most appropriate settings in communities so that

Excellence through a caring, learning community



children of frontline workers can still go to work. We will of course keep you up to date as we hear further information.

How is the school supporting children with specific needs?

We know our students well and staff have been working hard this week to set up ways of supporting children who have an EHCP due to learning needs, require a free school meal or have a need for pastoral support during this period of school closure. Our Student Development Team have put in place the following measures.

1. The Learning Support Team have been preparing packs of work for children with learning needs and will continue to communicate with those children and their parents to try and maintain some regular contact with staff at the school. We have also provided families with a Learning Support email address so that they can stay in contact with the team.
2. We have provided a supermarket voucher to the parents of our free school meal children to cover the period of time up to the end of this half term. The government will shortly be publishing an update regarding the national voucher scheme.
3. Our pastoral team have emailed all of our students to let them know that if they have any concerns or are worried about something they can email us on pastoral@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk. This will be monitored during normal school hours.

What will happen now that GCSE and A-Level exams have been cancelled this summer?

You will be aware of the announcement regarding the cancellation of all assessments and exams for the summer 2020. Today, we have emailed our Year 10 to Year 13 students to reassure them that they will get their qualifications. This is a challenging time for all of our students and particularly challenging for those who were looking forward to their exams this summer. Our students want to earn their achievements but now this opportunity has been taken away from them. We would ask all parents and students to trust that the education system will ensure that they receive the qualifications they deserve. We will be in touch as soon as we receive clarification about the approach to teacher assessments.

I am sure you sense that things have changed since the announcement to close schools and cancel exams. Things feel a little different. Whilst there is more certainty about the way forward for schools, we do not yet have an idea about when schools will reopen and it is possible that they will remain closed until September; although this has not been announced. It is very clear that we all now need to carry out our duty to each other, and to society, and limit social contact whilst finding ways of supporting each other. We need to prioritise our families and this means that some things will just not get done.

With this in mind, the picture has changed considerably at The Lakes School. A few days ago, we were setting ourselves up to provide regular support to our students and staff were going to do this from a base in school where possible. However, we now have a significant number of staff who are at home due to expectations about social distancing which can make carrying out their school duties a challenge. Whilst I will provide all parents with a further update before the weekend, it is clear that we are entering a phase where the capacity of staff to provide regular support to students is going to be limited.

In closing, I would like to thank so many of you for your messages of support at this challenging time; they are much appreciated.

Best wishes to you all and to your families.



Andy Cunningham
Headteacher



Excellence through a caring, learning community