

13<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent,

It's been a busy period of announcements from the government so we felt it was important to get in touch and provide you with our own updates which we hope will go some way towards reassuring you about the school's position and the work we are doing to prepare for the possibility of reopening school to some or all of our students at some point in the future. Along with this letter, we have also sent a letter to all parents from Dan Barton, Assistant Director of Education, Cumbria County Council which all schools have been asked to forward.

It is important for us to reassure parents that, whilst the government has an ambition of opening schools to Year 10 and Year 12 students at some point around July, this ambition could change in light of future developments and scientific advice. In addition, it is also important for us to say that we will not be opening the school to any students before September if we feel that it is unsafe or unwise to do so. We have a duty of care to staff, students and families and the steps set out below will determine our own local decision about whether or not we can open to certain students before September. With so many variables at play, and such uncertainty about the weeks ahead, we would ask families to prepare for the possibility that we may not be able to welcome back students in any year group before September.

Just like all schools, we have much work to do and some important decisions to make. We share with you the information below so that you are fully informed about our plans and we hope you find it useful.

### **What steps are the school taking to prepare for the possibility of students returning?**

Alongside making provision to safeguard our students, provide pastoral support and remote learning opportunities, we are working hard to set out a 'Return to School Action Plan.' This plan will set out the many considerations we need to make and the actions we need to put in place before staff and students in any year group can safely return to school. We have an outline plan for this which we are tailoring to The Lakes School.

We are keeping up to date with the daily bulletins and announcements from the government via the Department for Education and, more locally, Cumbria County Council. The government has recently published guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings and we subscribe to the latest health and safety updates as part of our policy to safeguard staff, students and visitors. We are also linked strongly to the wider schools network, particularly through the South Lakes Federation, which is a strong source of expertise.

Once all of this work has been completed, we intend to publish information to parents which will provide you with reassurances about the steps we have in place to keep your child as safe as possible from the virus and we will publish this to you before we expect you to send your child in to school.

### **How will parents be able to contribute to the school's plans about reopening to students?**

We would like to engage with parents so that we can better understand your personal views about the possibility of your child returning to school so we will be contacting the parents of

Year 10 and Year 12 parents soon given that your children are the subject of the most recent announcements about a possible return to school in July. We are sure you will agree that it is important for us to factor in parent views when we are considering any possible plans for reopening The Lakes School to some students in July. At the moment, we feel that it is too early to be gauging the feelings of Key Stage 3 parents about a possible return to school in September but we will be in touch next half term.

### **What will happen in September 2020; will all children be able to return to school?**

Year 7, 8 and 9 students were not specifically mentioned in the recent announcements but it is understood that students in these year groups will not be returning to school until September at the earliest. There is still much uncertainty about the arrangements for September but it would seem that there is a collective desire for all children to start the new academic year in September as normal. We are operating on this basis by preparing student timetables, carrying out our normal transition conversations with Year 6 teachers and making preparations for GCSE and A-Level results days in August.

However, it is still too early for the government and schools to commit with any certainty to fully reopening in September but it would be nice to think that we would be in a position to safely welcome back all of our students at this time. In all likelihood, the work we are doing now on planning to make The Lakes School 'Covid Secure' will put us in a good position for a time when we are able to open again, be that July, September or later.

### **Engagement in remote learning; how is my child doing?**

In line with our duty to safeguard our students, we recently asked staff to think about which students they had not heard from since school closed before the Easter break. We were particularly interested to find out which students had not engaged with many of their teachers so that we could write to their parents and offer understanding and support. This was purely a pastoral exercise and not a reflection on a child's behaviour as we recognise that many families may be experiencing a range of circumstances that make it difficult for their child to engage in remote learning for a period of time. It is important for us to let parents know if their child is not engaging with their teachers as we are sure that you would like to know so that you can best support your child and work with the school to solve any problems.

We are pleased to be able to share that 76% of Lakes School students are engaging with the majority of their teachers. Inevitably, this will ebb and flow across the weeks as children find space and time at home to complete work and we do understand that remote learning is part of a balance of activities in a child's day.

Remote learning is a recent development for most young people, just as it is for teachers, and it requires the development of new skills and emotional intelligence. We will soon be sharing an easy to access guide to remote learning etiquette which will encourage students to use the conventions of email and the quick and easy tools in Office 365 to show their teachers that they are engaged with their learning. We look forward to sharing this with everyone soon and thank you in the meantime for encouraging your child to maintain communications with their teachers as best they can. Thank you also to the parents who have emailed to provide their child's form tutor with updates about how they are managing at home. It is always helpful to let your child's teachers know if they are finding things a little difficult for a while.

### **Opening of Home Hub Schools from June 1<sup>st</sup> 2020**

You will see from Dan Barton's letter to parents that all schools in Cumbria have been asked to prepare for the possibility of opening as a 'Home Hub School' from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. We are currently in the process of following the government guidance on opening as a hub school to



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see if this will be feasible from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. We will be in touch soon with parents of children who have been accessing the current hub school provision at Staveley Primary School and we would ask all parents who may need to access Home Hub School provision to prepare for the eventuality that we may not be able to open from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Thank you for your understanding and for your patience whilst we explore the possibility of opening as a Home Hub School. We will be in touch soon.

### **Thank you for your support**

We continue to be very grateful indeed for your kind emails of support for the work staff are doing to provide remote learning opportunities for your children. We have enjoyed reading such lovely stories about how so many families have been balancing remote learning with what has become a special time together as a family. Students have been sending their teachers photos of their school work and it has been our pleasure to share these amongst all of our staff as part of our good news briefing. We have even set up a staff Microsoft Teams group for just this purpose!

We would also like to thank you for your understanding with regard to our work to safeguard our students and to provide pastoral care. We still have a duty of care towards all of our students to ensure that everyone is safe, engaging as best they can with remote learning and able to seek support should they need it. As a quick reminder, students can contact their form tutor should they need any support or if they have any concerns. Students and parents can also share information with our core pastoral team via the email address [pastoral@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:pastoral@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk).

In closing, we wish you and your family continued good health. If you would like to stay up to date with the latest information for parents, please follow this link to the latest government update for parents which was published 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Yours sincerely



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