

7th January 2021

Dear Parent

I would like to begin by saying how much we miss welcoming your child to our classrooms and corridors. This is heartfelt. Teaching is challenging, exciting and rewarding. Learning is too. We do so wish that our school could return to being the vibrant, caring, learning community that we have all worked so hard to achieve. When the school was judged Good in all areas by Ofsted in November 2019, we looked forward to a time when we would continue to build on the partnership we had established with students, parents and the community.

Whilst the journey we pictured has changed direction slightly, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone in The Lakes School community for being so supportive at a time when the hand we are being dealt can often lead us to feel frustrated. We are a school that always encourages students to 'make things happen'. Staff model this every day with the new ideas they have and initiatives they develop to support children and now, more than ever, we need to embrace this same sense of purpose to ensure that all of the students at The Lakes School make the most of their time; not because of exam grades, but because learning, self-improvement and valuing yourself are important steps for all of us to take.

The government has made numerous announcements since 17th December 2020. We work hard to keep parents informed and we try very much to put you on the front foot so that you can parent your child effectively and enjoy a gentle home-life. This has become very challenging in recent times as we learn of education policy through the media at the same time as yourselves. Even so, I would like to apologise for the detrimental impact that recent developments have had on your life as a family and reassure you that we will always work hard to provide you with concrete ground and a clear message about the weeks ahead.

This letter aims to do just that. I hope that you find the following updates useful and we would always encourage you to contact us via admin@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk should you have any questions or queries.

Examinations

The government have announced that children in England will not now sit tests or exams for SATs, GCSEs, A-Levels or BTEC courses. Given the disruption to students, we are supportive of this step, but we know our Year 11 and Year 13 students must be thinking, 'So how will my grade be decided?'

The Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, has announced recently that schools will receive training so that they can decide on the Centre Assessed Grades for each child. Whilst we do not yet know what this training will involve, I would like to reassure all parents that teachers at The Lakes School are highly experienced in assessing students in line with the national curriculum and we will be working hard to ensure that we follow the guidance and the training made available.

Remote Learning

All students will be able to access remote learning from Monday 11th January 2021. Twelve months ago, Microsoft Teams was part of our school Office 365 license, but we had no idea how instrumental it would be in supporting the learning of our students in the year ahead. Do please get in touch via admin@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk if you have any questions at all about how your child can best access their remote learning and we will be only too pleased to help.

Remote learning does come with its issues. We all need to achieve a balance between our time spent online and the time we spend outside or reading or being creative or satisfying our spiritual needs. This is even more true for young people. We need to model a healthy lifestyle and hours spent on a computer or a mobile device should not become the norm.

The government has recommended that children should be accessing 3 to 5 hours of remote learning a day.

Teachers at The Lakes School will **not** be expecting children to be online for 3 to 5 hours each day.

We have a duty of care to all of our students and staff and we do not believe that this much time routinely spent online is conducive to learning or to establishing a healthy lifestyle. Equally, a child's broader development and well-being is reliant on the development of creativity, spirituality, productivity, connectivity and a huge range of other aspects that do not require a computer or mobile device.

With this in mind, we will shortly be sharing our Remote Learning Policy which clarifies the school's approach to remote learning. In addition, I thought it would be helpful to share that your child's teachers may well arrange to provide teaching for the first part of a lesson, set a series of assignments and then arrange for a class to submit their assignments or return to an online lesson after a few days. In a normal school class, teachers would provide initial teaching and then provide time for students to work independently on tasks which is a valuable learning experience. Different subjects and different teachers will approach their teaching in a different way and a with a different rhythm depending on their subject matter. It is most important that students enter in to a dialogue with their teachers online, just as they would in class. It's not ok to sit back and wait. Please encourage your child to contact their teachers via Teams chat or email if they are unsure about their work or if they are progressing quickly and are ready to move on.

Devices and Internet Access

Good internet access and a suitable computer or mobile device is more important than ever for children. Is your child struggling with internet access? If so, please do email us at admin@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk to explain your circumstances and we will do our best to support your child so that they can seamlessly access remote learning.

Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs)

During the Christmas break, secondary schools were required to set up for LFTs from 4th January 2021. We received a delivery of LFTs and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on 4th January 2021. Then, schools were asked to move to remote learning so the LFT programme has ceased. Whilst we have the equipment and resources in school, we do not know if this will be required when students return to school later in the year, but we will of course keep you informed as we receive further information.



Excellence through a caring, learning community

We received 268 responses to our parent survey about LFTs. 87% of respondents said that they would support their child having a LFT. This is slightly higher than the national average which shows a great deal of support in the community to take steps that will enable children to safely return to school. Thank you for responding so swiftly to our survey.

Useful Email Addresses

General Enquiries	Admin@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk
Office 365 Password Issues	Password@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk
Student worries or concerns for the attention of the pastoral team	Pastoral@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk
SEND Team	LS@lakes.cumbria.sch.uk

Useful Links

Please find below a series of useful links which will take you directly to resources on our website, many of which were created to support students and parents during the first lockdown period in the summer of 2020. In addition to the links below, students should also make use of the subject specific pages of our website which can be found in the Learning menu.

[The Lakes School Website](#)

[Self-Study Guide](#)

[Letter from 20th March 2020: Contains useful advice for remote learning](#)

[Pastoral Support](#)

[BBC Teach: Live Lessons](#)

[BBC Learning at Home](#)

Form Tutors

Your child's Form Tutor will be keeping in regular contact with your child via email and Microsoft Teams. This is an important relationship in school and your child's Form Tutor should be seen as a key point of contact should your child need any particular support. Our students can easily contact their Form Tutor through Teams or through their school email account in Office 365.

It appears to be a recurring theme that I end my letters with thanks to all parents for your continued support and understanding. Before Christmas, many of you emailed our admin account to pass on your thanks and support to the staff and this has continued just this week. Your kind words and gestures make a huge difference at a time when we are all just trying to stabilise the world around us so that our children can focus on their learning and their future. Each of your kind messages is shared via our Good News staff group in Microsoft Teams. I shall end this letter as I began which is with another heartfelt message – this time, one of thanks for all that you are doing to support the school during such unusual times.

Warmest regards



Andy and Everyone at The Lakes School



Excellence through a caring, learning community