



18 May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

The wider reopening of schools

Further to my letter to you on Tuesday, the senior team has been collecting thoughts on how best to proceed in light of the government's recent announcement that schools should begin to prepare for the possible return of some pupils from 1st June. This is clearly difficult territory to navigate given a whole host of factors, some of which have played out in the media over the weekend. My sense is that some form of consensus/agreement will emerge nationally over the coming days as the various parties continue to engage. In the meantime, I wanted to share our thinking to date as we prepare for some form of return.

One immediate aspect to clarify is that we'll be focusing on the return of year 6 only in the first few weeks of reopening, rather than year 8. There had been some debate about the latter given they are in their final year, but the government has given a clear steer to middles that it wants it to be the former. Going with year 6 aligns us with the other middle schools in the Hexham Partnership. This will, I know, be disappointing for some parents and pupils. However, the year 8s have already undertaken key high school transfer activity, we will still have some form of remote equivalent to the final transfer day in July, and we are giving thought to how we might also appropriately mark the end of their time at HMS.

I shall be writing separately to parents of children in year 6 in order to get an initial indication of likely intentions about their children returning. This will be based on broad proposals initially, which will become more specific as this week develops. As the fuller detail emerges, I shall share this with parents of all pupils so you know what it going on.

Children of key workers and those who are vulnerable

Arrangements for those in years 5, 7 and 8 for whom on-site provision has been available since lockdown began, will continue in the Orchard block. Please go through the established channels of communication if this applies to you and your child.

Remote learning at home

Thank you very much to all who responded to our recent survey on this. We had 204 responses. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and we really appreciated the many lovely comments. We also valued the suggestions you made about how we can do even better and are fine tuning our approach as a consequence. There was follow up action on all child-specific points raised, but if there are any outstanding issues, please let us know.

A handful of parents asked that we look into providing virtual lessons. After discussing this further, we have decided to broadly maintain our existing approach, which, beyond the staff/pupil interaction that takes place via Google Classrooms, provides things like video challenges and other communications so that good contact is maintained. Please encourage your child to join their form group classroom where they can consider activities and challenges which encourage more interaction.

Staffing update

Some of you may have heard on the grapevine that Mrs Frankish has secured promotion to the role of Deputy Headteacher of a secondary school in Carlisle. Mrs Frankish has made an outstanding contribution to HMS over the past six years and we will be sorry to see her go. However, life goes on and we are in the process of recruiting someone to take over Mrs Frankish's pastoral responsibilities from September. I will let you know the outcome of this in due course but, for now, I am delighted to be able to tell you that Mr Watters will assume the position of Acting Deputy Headteacher next year.

With all good wishes until my next letter to you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Akins', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Graeme Akins
Executive Headteacher

