



Tuesday, 5 January 2021

Dear Parents,

I hope that you had a very pleasant and restful Christmas holiday.

I am sorry that the beginning of term has been so odd, and we can only hope that with the new national lockdown in place from today, we now have a clear pathway until half term and can plan full online provision accordingly. Clearly, the previous plans for the staggered return of years 11 and 13, followed by the rest of the school, are now superseded by the need for all to stay at home until half term.

As your child returns to online learning, this week will be a necessary settling-in period. Please do contact form tutors, academic or pastoral staff if you have any concerns, however minor they may seem. There are bound to be some teething troubles, but our aim is to have things running perfectly within the next day or two.

I wanted to take this opportunity to answer three pressing questions;

Public Examinations

Last evening there was acknowledgement that the summer series of public examinations cannot now take place in the expected format. It is too soon yet to say exactly what will happen, but we assume that there will be a refined and improved version of last years' Centre Assessed Grades. When we know more, I shall share the information with you.

We have now received confirmation that next week's CTEC examination for yr 13 will go ahead. There has not been 100% confirmation concerning this Thursday's IGCSE Maths examination, but it seems very likely that this will also go ahead. We have set up for both sets of exams in the Harper Building examination hall, ensuring safe operation, and you will receive final instructions about this shortly. These January exams give an excellent opportunity for your child to take the examinations and get them out of the way, however, they will also be available to take/retake in the summer – and this may well be via Centre Assessed Grades (see above). Given the current situation, if you would prefer your child not to attend the January exams we are able to support your decision. It is important to let the school know tomorrow if your child is not going to be taking the IGCSE Maths this week, please.

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Predicted Grades for Year 11

Year 11 reports are being written this week. At this point we would usually give a 'predicted grade'. However, until we know exactly what mechanism the DfE will put in place for the summer examinations, we are going to supply a 'currently working at' grade, rather than a 'predicted grade'. We take the stating of predicted grades extremely seriously, and we must be in receipt of the official criteria for awarding these before we can feel confident that we have reached the correct conclusion, in the correct manner. 'Working at' grades will be, in the meantime, a very useful motivational tool, to be read in conjunction with teachers' comments. This, plus excellent lesson attendance, will be the means by which a student can work to close the gap between their current attainment and the grades to which they aspire.

Covid-19 testing arrangements at LMS

Beginning this week, we will be rolling out the Covid Testing Programme at Lincoln Minster School. We will test staff who are in school on a weekly basis, and the boarders will be our very first pupils to be tested. As I explained in my letter before Christmas, senior students and staff in every school across the country are being urged to have regular tests for Covid-19 so that we can minimise the risk of it spreading. I would like to thank everyone across the school who worked extremely hard last term to ensure that we did everything we could do then to minimise the risk of infection and transmission. Going forward, the opportunity for everyone to be tested regularly is an excellent addition to our toolkit for keeping everyone safe and healthy.

All senior schools in the country will be using what are known as 'lateral flow tests'. These have proved very successful and easy to use during pilot studies involving students and staff at some other United Learning schools last term. Importantly, the test can be carried out regularly and will return results in a very short space of time - which means that anyone who is infected is identified much more quickly and effectively.

The test will involve a throat and nose swab and will only take a few minutes. It is proven to be perfectly safe and the test will tell you if your child is carrying the virus that causes Covid-19, even if they are not showing any symptoms. I know that this will be of reassurance to many parents, particularly at this time of cases increasing nationally.

Students who test negative will, of course, be able to stay in school as normal. We will communicate the broad results of year-group testing to all, but you will receive an individual email to inform you if your child has **tested positive**. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

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Students who test positive will be informed about their results individually and they will need to take a further test on the same day (or as soon as possible), known as a PCR test, to confirm the result. We will be able to provide test kits for this to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. It may be quicker to visit a drive-through test site if you are able to do so. Whilst waiting for the PCR test result, your child will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a positive result your child must continue to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace. Any boarder with a positive result will follow the protocols established last term.

Taking part in the testing is optional but I would urge parents to ensure that your child joins me, and other members of staff, in participating. To do so, please fill in the short Registration form and also the Consent form attached (one per student) and return it to this email address. **As we would like to test boarders this week, please would boarding parents whose children are currently in school return this consent form by 17.00 on 06.01.2021.**

It is not yet possible to tell you when the whole school will be tested, but we are currently considering inviting years 11 and 13 in for testing on the last Friday of half-term – if they are to return to school on the following Monday, 22nd February. These plans are very provisional at the moment and are dependent on the trajectory of the pandemic.

Thank you in advance for helping us to keep our whole school community safe.

Thank you for your continued support, and may I wish you a very happy, successful and healthy 2021.

With kind regards,

Maria Young
Headmistress