

# Poynton High School

## and Performing Arts College

Head Teacher: Mr D. Waugh

Dear Parents and Carers

Happy VE Day! I hope that this letter finds you safe and well and that you are able to join in some appropriately socially distanced way, with the national commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. I suspect however that for a number of families my letter will find you in the midst of a great number of challenges. Challenges which may be financial due to the uncertainty over employment and future work, challenges due to the loss of loved ones or the separation anxiety from your family and friends, challenges over the sheer magnitude of the unknown with regard to your son or daughter's education, qualifications and future schooling. The purpose of my letter is to try and give you as best an update as I can on this last point about future schooling and the developments we are actively working on as a school community. Apologies that this letter is rather long (5 pages) and detailed and you may at this point wish just take a moment to make sure you have the time and space to read it fully, but I felt it important to be as open as I can be with our planning and actions.

I have broken this letter down into various sections but I must start with the caveat that most of what I am writing is sheer conjecture. This is based on my knowledge as your head teacher, as the Trust Leader for The TRUE Learning Partnership (the multi-academy trust that Poynton High School is a founding member of) and my role as the Vice President of the Association of School and College Leaders (the professional association for all senior school and college leaders across the UK). It is this last role that affords me a unique insight into the national debate and discussion of education policy and therefore has served us well in our active planning and anticipation of the critical incident response to Covid-19. The Prime Minister is due to make an address to the nation on Sunday afternoon and I fully expect that this announcement will include a statement on education and the possible start of a partial re-opening of the school system. Everything I write below is entirely theoretical planning over what might be announced, however I do suspect that I will not be that far off from the actual national position.

### Welfare of students and safeguarding

Lockdown is having an effect on the mental health and wellbeing of our students, and their families; any period of forced social isolation will do this. It is important that all students keep in touch with their friends via on-line means and that they have appropriate regular breaks throughout the day. In addition, it is important that they also have increasing contact with their welfare support staff and teachers here at school. We already have an extensive amount of school-home welfare checks happening but as we move forward we will be increasing the amount of welfare and learning contact between students and staff through a process of feedback, observation and interaction. Please see below.

In advance of this, if you have any concerns over the safeguarding of your child or feel that they would benefit from a welfare phone call, please do not hesitate to e-mail us at [safeguarding@phs.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@phs.cheshire.sch.uk) and we will arrange for contact to be made. In addition to that, if your home circumstances change and there is information you wish us to know, again please do not hesitate to contact us on the same e-mail address so that we can do our best to support you and your

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child during these very difficult times. There is also information available on our website over ways you can support your children in the home. Please also be aware that changes in financial circumstances may mean that your young person becomes eligible to access free school meals. You can find out more about this on the Cheshire East website here:

[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/free\\_school\\_meals.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/free_school_meals.aspx)

### Feedback, observation and interaction

Since the closure of school to the vast majority of students in March we have been working on the basis of setting work through our Doodle Learning Platform. However, this has functionality limitations in that it does not allow us to interact (two way dialogue) with students over the work that has been set. This has not been an issue with our sixth form students as there is a separate system and set of guidelines for them. I recognise that this area needs to be addressed urgently and therefore have approved a £3,000 order for a system that will seamlessly link our information management system to Google Classroom. Mr Matthew Dean (Deputy Head Teacher) is leading on this area for us and over the next two weeks we will start to roll out Google Classroom to all students.

Next week you will receive a specific letter in this regard explaining how it will work, shortly followed by the password information. We are aiming for full functionality by week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> June. This will mean we can focus on embedding our Feedback-Observation-Interaction learning strategy. Feedback being the use of Google Classroom to set, monitor and receive work from students so that periodic marking and feedback can be established on key assessment pieces. Observation being the use of both Google Classroom and the PHS You Tube Channel for on line video tutorials of key learning demonstrations so that students can observe our staff explaining or demonstrating key aspects of the curriculum. Interaction being the use of Google Classroom to support the roll out of mini tutorials, lessons or supportive interactions. At the time of closure we just did not have a suitable platform upon which to establish this and now with the rapid software installation to link our system to Google Classroom we will be able to provide a more detailed and sustainable long term learning solution for students learning at home.

Furthermore, we are rapidly establishing a new 'artificial intelligence' driven platform called Century Tech. Century's intelligent recommendation engine identifies gaps in knowledge and misconceptions and builds a personalised learning path for every learner, tailored to their needs. Identify knowledge gaps and remedying misconceptions. This really is a cutting edge platform and has been purchased through our partnership as a multi-academy trust.

### GCSEs, A-Levels and BTECs

All staff are currently undertaking an extensive process for the establishing of the 'Centre Assessed Grades' for all GCSEs, A-Levels and BTECs. The information regarding BTECs is not fully finalised yet by the awarding bodies and I expect further update on that next week. We do, however, expect that there will also a similar approach to the other qualifications. For GCSEs and A-Levels, staff are following the national guidelines in formulating the rank order and centre assessed grades for each qualification. This is a mammoth task as we have over 2100 GCSEs to establish and 400 A-Levels. If you would like more information on this please visit the government website via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcses-as-and-a-level-awarding-summer-2020>.

I have set up a dedicated e-mail address for any questions from students and parents regarding this. Please do not e-mail staff directly so as to keep them free to support the at-home working but rather e-mail [exams2020@phs.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:exams2020@phs.cheshire.sch.uk) if you have any questions regarding the Year 11 or Year 13 qualifications. We have developed a section on our website for 'frequently asked questions' and I

would encourage you to visit there in the first instance. This can be found on

<https://www.phs.cheshire.sch.uk/news/?pid=6&nid=1&storyid=234> Please be aware I have instructed staff to not answer directly any questions regarding the grading of qualifications so as to ensure that the most accurate, fair and consistent message will be given.

### Plans for the potential restart of the school system

I fully expect that the government will announce some details on Sunday regarding the potential re-introduction of a targeted group of students back into schools. There is great debate nationally over who will be this target group with the press suggesting it will be Year 10 and Year 12, scientific advice dependent. There is even greater debate over the date from which such a re-introduction will start but again I suspect that a date will be given in either June or early July for secondary schools to start to re-introduce the target year groups back into schools in some guise, possibly over a 2 to 3 week re-introduction phase. The provision for key worker families and vulnerable young people will continue as now as we have remained open to these students throughout lockdown. If such a re-introduction phase is established, all other non-targeted year groups will remain at home, hence the roll out of our Feedback-Observation-Interaction learning strategy. I believe that we will have approximately a 3-week notice period by government from an announcement to the start of the re-introduction phase.

Here at Poynton High School we are working on a four phase approach to the potential re-starting of our school:

- **Pre-opening phase;** we have already started this across school. This includes such work as...painting of classrooms and corridors, deep cleaning of carpets across the schools, deep cleaning of offices, 'ULV fogging disinfectant cleaning' of all rooms (Inc. classrooms, offices, bathrooms and toilets), removal of furniture from rooms to support enforced social distancing, installation of Perspex screens in receptions and canteens, etc. I have had this established now for a number of weeks.
- **Partial –Targeted phase,** i.e. where we open for specific targeted students, as determined by government, on a partial basis (most likely to be Yr10 & Yr12). I would expect that this will be from June through to July however I must stress that these dates are not confirmed and are simply the dates I am working towards for planning and preparation purposes. In addition to this we will need to focus on Yr6 induction as the 'rising' year 7 cohort. We are working with our partner primary schools to ensure that this is a full community approach.
- **Partial-Full phase,** i.e. where we open for all students on a partial basis; students possibly doing 1 day per week in school with 4 days home learning, on a rota basis. I would expect that this will be most of the Autumn Term. I am working on modelling this as 20% of young people in school at any one point with 60—75% of the staffing. This is entirely for modelling purposes. Again, it may be that the scientific evidence suggests that schools can reopen fully however I must plan for all eventualities and a model where all students are in fully is the simplest model to establish as that is a full return to normal. I am therefore planning on the basis of the most complicated system to establish in order to ensure we are able to get it up and running as quickly, smoothly and safely as possible.
- **Full Phase,** i.e. full return for all students. I would not expect this until 2021 however this is entirely conjecture. We will be led by the science and DfE guidance.

In order to have any form of restarting of the system I have been working on various pre-opening strategies and the planning for running a school under socially distancing guidelines. To that end, I wanted to give you a flavour of some of the strategies that I am working on so that you can begin to support your child over what a return to school may look like. I am concerned about the impact on



students possibly returning to a system that they have never witnessed and that they would have to adhere to without question and therefore if you could sit down and discuss the content of this letter with them I would be very grateful. Please note, these strategies are not in any particular priority order, I am simply offering them to you as a wide range of examples:

- External Visitors. We will not be allowing external visitors to school during the Partial-Targeted Phase. Parent/carer and professional meetings will need to be undertaken via telephone or video conference. Where this is not possible, school will have a room with appropriate Plexiglas screening available.
- Mini Schools and School One-Way Systems. We will be establishing a strict one-way corridor system across school. To support this, we are modelling splitting schools into separate zones with separate entrances. This will allow us to reduce cross-population between young people coming into school and they will effectively be educated in a school within a school. At present I am modelling this on the basis of School N, School H and School S. Each school will have, as part of their 'recovery curriculum', a keen focus on their respective citizenship theme of National, Health and Service. This is very much in the early form of planning but if it were to be Years 10, 12 and key work family children as the initial returners to school, I would establish Year 12 as 'School Service', Year 10 as 'School National' and the key worker family students in 'School Health'. These themes lend themselves nicely to supporting the personal, social, health and citizenship education programmes that we will need to establish to support the transition of students from lock down back to school.
- Removal of furniture. We will be removing furniture from rooms in order to change the physical environment to support social distancing, e.g. only 10 desks per room with 10 chairs, a taped 2m exclusion zone around the teacher desk and whiteboard, etc.
- New staff working areas. We will be 'commandeering' parts of school to be designated as staff working areas where these are socially distanced. Each member of staff would have their own desk, chair, working space, etc. and this would be labelled accordingly
- Calendar. We are working on the basis of a significant overhaul of the autumn term school calendar, for example...a virtual approach to parents evenings and information evenings, no external trips or field courses, new approach to open evenings, etc.
- Assemblies. Currently working on the basis of no physical assemblies but a process by which assemblies and collective worship is filmed and circulated electronically.
- Staff Code of Dress and Student Uniform. It is highly unlikely that we will return with ties and blazers. We need to reduce the amount of fabric that staff and parents/carers need to wash in order to encourage a good personal approach to hygiene
- PPE packs for staff. We are working on the basis of providing staff with a 'daily pack'. This could include for example, 2 masks, 2 pairs of gloves, daily lanyard, etc. The exact pack will be determined by the scientific evidence from the DfE. At present, I am modelling the requirement for 2200 masks, 2200 pairs of gloves, 1100 aprons, 440 hand sanitisers and 2.6km of barrier tape PER WEEK to support our PPE approach across the 5 schools within our multi-academy trust. We will be guided by the government in regard to any potential provision of PPE for students.
- Staff and Student Re-socialisation. I am working on a plan to support our staff returning first and then our young people. We need to ensure that we protect our own mental health and well-being through open and transparent communication of our strategies. It will be a shock for all involved to have left our school in early March to return in June/July to a 'new world order'
- Medical Care. We are increasing the capacity within medical care teams and also increasing the space available to support. I will be securing a major section of school to act as a medical care facility where support can be given to any member of our in-school community who is perhaps feeling unwell or exhibiting symptoms.

- School Transport. We are actively assessing the impact on school transport based on various scenarios of returning target groups. More details of this would be released in due course when we know more from government regarding a return cohort.
- Students with care plans. Specific arrangements are being made to support the re-introduction of students with care plans back into schools. Our Learning Support Team will make contact as soon as we have further guidance over the specific target group of students for returning.

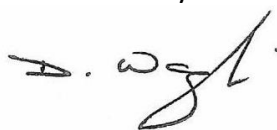
Staff have been working extensively to support in-school learning, home-learning, management of the site and the planning for the re-introduction of the school system. I am so very grateful for their support and dedication and wanted to take a moment to formally thank them within this letter. I am humbled to serve them, and you, through this time.

As you can imagine, the level of detail over the planning and risk assessment for our eventual re-opening of school is extensive. Before such a time that we do open more fully I will provide you with a full briefing document so that you can see exactly what the plans are to support both students coming in and those who are remaining at home. I must stress however, that this is entirely conjecture on my part. All of the detail in this letter regarding the potential restart of the system is not fact. This is for modelling purposes and active planning. The Prime Minister will make an announcement on Sunday and this may or may not include information about schools. However, I am aware that the constant media speculation is having a detrimental impact on the well-being of staff, students and parents and carers. The constant 'will they?', 'won't they?', 'how will they?' is leading to a great deal of speculation, uncertainty and in some cases anxiety and fear. The purpose of my letter is to give you some indication of the extensive planning and the modelling that we are undertaking and the sheer magnitude of the challenges of returning to an in-school system under social distancing guidelines. I hope that we will achieve further clarity over the weekend on both the expectation on schools for future schooling and the scientific evidence for supporting social distancing in a school setting.

I very much appreciate that this letter will be analysed extensively by our school community and that you will also have a good number of additional questions, most of which I will not be able to answer. However, if you do wish to make comment please do not hesitate to contact me ([dwaugh@phs.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:dwaugh@phs.cheshire.sch.uk)) and I will endeavour to support your enquiry as best I can. Once we know more, I may be writing to you again requesting support as it is highly likely that we will require storage solutions (for excess furniture), printing solutions (for additional signage), handwashing solutions (to increase the number of handwashing stations) and separating barriers to be able to establish one-way systems. When I know more I will write again.

All it leaves me to say is, THANK YOU! I continue to be humbled by your support and your understanding. I just hope, truly, that what comes out of this is a better world, and I genuinely mean that, one where we might be kinder, smile more, support more, and realign our priorities in life. Please, stay safe, stay healthy, stay home.

Yours faithfully



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