



# Parents' Newsletter 20/21



## Edition 7

**22 February 2021**

Dear Parent/Carers

I hope that you and your families are in good health. It has been a difficult start to 2021 for all of us, not least the young people in our schools who once again had to switch to online learning during the last half term. As you will be aware, the government will shortly announce its 'road map' for relaxing restrictions in different part of society. The wider re-opening of schools from 8 March onwards is high on the priority list but, at time of writing, we await to learn what the precise timings and conditions under which this will happen. We know that remote learning will continue for at least the first two weeks of this 5-week half term up to Easter. As soon as we have had a chance to absorb the government's plans for schools, we will write to you again with more details.

### **Attendance and Covid-19 case notifications**

We are still required to account for your son/daughter's attendance each day and this is one of the reasons why during this latest lockdown we have insisted that all students in Years 7-11 attend their daily Tutor Period between 8.55 and 9.20 each morning. As well as conveying important messages about the day ahead and maintaining that sense of a form group identity that is so important for us at Caedmon, this regular morning session is a chance for our tutors make sure that students are prepared for the day ahead. Online daily form period also helps us discharge the significant safeguarding responsibilities we have, whether operating on site or remotely, that children are safe and engaging in education. As you would do during normal times, please let us know if there is a reason why your son/daughter will not be accessing online lessons on a particular day by contacting our attendance line on 01947 602406. Our pastoral team will continue to follow-up unexplained absences by phoning or making unannounced home visits.

We are also required to continue to notify the local authority and public health services of any confirmed cases of Covid-19 in our school community, despite school being closed to most students. Again, please ring our attendance line to convey details of confirmed cases in your household.

### **Remote Learning**

Thank you for all the support you have been giving our students as they've studied remotely at home during this latest lockdown. Building on the systems we quickly put in place last spring, we felt it was important to move to timetable of 'live' lessons, supported by offline lessons during which students are expected to complete work set on Google Classroom.

As we return from the half term break, your son/daughter's daily timetable will continue to be based on the one they follow when in school. They all have at least 15 'live' lessons a week, in most cases 3 per day. We are using the Google Meet software to facilitate these lessons as it is fully integrated into the school's email and Google Classroom infrastructure. Assignments are usually set through Google Classroom and may at times involve other more specialist software such as MyMaths, GCSEPod, Duolingo or Seneca, the passwords for which your son/daughter should be aware of. We record attendance to and participation in all 'live' lessons and Directors of Learning will continue to follow up with students about whom we have concerns. All lessons at Whitby Sixth Form are by default 'live' unless a different arrangement has been agreed by Ms Boyd and the Sixth Form Team.

Based on our experience over recent months, our 'top tips' for success with home learning would include:

- making sure that your son/daughter is using either a laptop, Chromebook or desktop computer. Although they might be able to access and read information on Google Classroom using a phone or tablet, they will be hindered in completing tasks of any length or complexity of these types of device. Let us know if you are interested in loaning a Chromebook from College for the rest of the lockdown period

- ensuring that your son/daughter has a table to work on, in a quiet part of your house
- asking your son/daughter about the work they are engaged in on a regular, daily basis. If the answers you are receiving don't quite seem right to you, please contact us and we can clarify exactly what our expectations have been.

### **Your views**

We surveyed our students a few weeks ago about their experiences during this latest lockdown. We would welcome your view too and have adapted our student survey to capture a parental perspective. It is framed in such a way for you to be able to answer about the experiences of your eldest and youngest child (if you have more than one attending Caedmon College or Whitby Sixth Form). If you have 3 or more children attending CCW/WSF, we will let you decide which two children you would like to provide answers about; I'm sure that this will still convey your family's experience. Follow this link to access the form: <https://forms.gle/58AAAXo5bQrbf4B3A>. It is anonymous and we will not be capturing any respondents email addresses.

### **Free School Meals vouchers**

Thank you to our families whose children receive free school meals for their cooperation in recent weeks as we have had to contend with 3 different schemes for sourcing and distributing vouchers. The national term time scheme run by Edenred is certainly working far more smoothly than last spring and it is pleasing to see that it now offers a wider range of supermarkets at which the vouchers can be redeemed. We have contacted families about the supermarket vouchers that covered the February half term holiday week that we had to source locally. If you have not yet received them, please telephone us on 01947 602406 during normal school hours. We will keep you informed about the implications for FSM voucher scheme as schools begin to re-open as soon as we have any details to share with you.

### **Year 8 Choices/Year 9 Options**

Thank you to all the parents and students in Years 8 and 9 who attended our online Year 8 Choices and Year 9 Options Evenings during the week leading up to half term. In these socially distanced times, it was lovely to see so many familiar faces. The 30-minute format seemed to work well, allowing us to present key information about the process and be able to answer any questions asked. If you attended either of these evenings, we would welcome your feedback. Now that we have all become so much more familiar with video conferencing, we are interested in how we might adopt events such as these in the future once society returns to some sort of normality. If you have not already done so, please watch the series of short videos that our teachers recorded, giving details of courses that are relevant whether your child is making Year 8 Choices or Year 9 Options. Follow this link <https://bit.ly/3pDe4zd>. A reminder that Year 8 Choices and Year 9 Options forms need to be completed and returned to school before the end of this week.

### **GCSE, A-level, BTEC and other vocational qualifications**

At the start of this latest lockdown the government also announced that the examinations for GCSE, A-level and other qualifications would not happen in the normal way this summer. Ofqual, the government agency that oversees these of these qualifications, carried out a consultation in late January/early February about how best to proceed with the awarding and grading of GCSEs, A-levels and BTECs this year, the results of which and their recommendations to government are due to be announced in the coming days. Without trying to second guess what these recommendations might be, Ofqual has already signalled that this year's awarding process will be different to last year's in some important ways. One obvious difference is that the examination classes of 2020 had not experienced disruption to their education until schools and colleges were instructed to close on 20 March. By this stage, most GCSE and A-level course content had been taught and most classes were on the point of beginning their final revision programmes. The Year 11 and Post 16 classes of 2021 have, of course, experienced far more disruption over the span of their two-year courses but, hopefully, will be able to return to school for the spring and early summer months. Teacher assessments will again form the basis of any grade recommendations, but it seems likely that some form of external moderation of these judgements will be built into this year's system in a way that simply was not possible to do last summer. The difficulties that Ofqual and the examination boards face

are significant, designing a system that is fair within individual schools and then between schools nationally.

How this all translates to what will be required of teachers and students will hopefully become clearer in the coming days. The way in which the consultation was framed would suggest an expectation that any teacher assessments are made based on what students are achieving (note the *present tense*) in late May/early June and not on the evidence alone of mock examinations that may or may not have been taken under controlled conditions in different schools this winter. That is why we continue to insist that all Year 11 and Post 16 students, without exception, fully engage in the online learning programmes our teaching staff have designed during this current lockdown. Once schools re-open for these year groups we will have to quickly and seamlessly pick up where the online learning finishes to build up students' expertise and competence in the subjects they are studying by late May/early June. At the very least, with progression onto Post 16 or higher education courses in mind, it is likely that as full a completion of courses as possible will be an important priority in any of the plans that emerge in the coming days.

### **Whitby Sixth Form**

Students in Year 12 and 13 have been as busy during lockdown as before Christmas. All A-level and Level 3 BTEC lessons have moved to 'live' streamed lessons, with teachers continuing to offer individual support outside of these times. Students in both year groups studying Level 3 BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses were particularly disappointed that we had to take the difficult decision to cancel their external January exams at the start of term. They had all been revising hard and their teachers were very confident that all students would have given a good account of themselves. We have strong evidence of this from a range of internal assessments that students completed before Christmas.

Our Year 13 A-level students completed a first round of mock examinations in late January. Showing their adaptability to our new circumstances, teachers supervised these exams through the magic of a video link to each student. There really is no escaping in this brave new world of ours is there! Whilst we know that A-level examinations have been cancelled this summer, this was an important opportunity for our students to demonstrate to their teachers and themselves what they have learnt over the last 16 months. As we are always at pains to emphasise to our students, mock examinations are a great way of getting some feedback on areas of strength and those that require further study.

Our Sixth Form Team has a busy few months throughout the autumn and up to the end of January deadline supporting students with university applications. At time of writing, every student has at least one offer of a conditional place at university next year; several have received offers from all the institutions they applied to. Indeed, with 4 out of 5 applications having already been processed, so far we have had an amazing 92% success rate in students securing offers. Once again, this year WSF students are applying for a diverse range of courses including medicine, natural sciences, law, child nursing, criminology, English literature, psychology, criminology, sociology, politics, engineering, costume design, fine art, midwifery and paramedic science. Offers have been secured from Oxford, Cambridge (2), Bath, Hull, York, Northumbria, York, Manchester, Leeds Beckett, Liverpool John Moores, Central Lancashire, Teesside, CU Scarborough, York St John, Kings College London, Bangor and Manchester Met, to name just a few. 'All roads may lead to Rome' as the saying goes, but 'all roads certainly leave from Whitby Sixth Form' to all points around the country!

Recruitment into Whitby Sixth Form for September 2021 from Year 11 students at Eskdale School and Caedmon College continues apace. In tandem with the more general careers interviews that Ms Mackle and some of her external colleagues have been carrying out, our Sixth Form Team have also been interviewing students from both schools on a one-to-one basis. If you or your son/daughter would like some future information about our offer at Whitby Sixth Form and would like to arrange a personal interview, please contact us at [post@sixthformwhitby.org](mailto:post@sixthformwhitby.org)

### **Parent governor election**

Before half term we sent out information about the election of a new parent governor to the Whitby Secondary Partnership. It has also been posted on our website. Please follow this link: <http://bit.ly/37EKV0m>. A reminder that nominations must be received by 12 noon on Friday 26 February.

## **And finally...**

It is with great sadness that we recently heard the news confirming Pete Brown's passing. I know that this will have been very sad news for many in the Caedmon community. I am sure that you will join all of us in College in passing on our sincerest condolences to Natalie, Jayden, Grace and all of Pete's wider family and friends during these sad times.

Looking ahead, we have a 5-week half term until the Easter break, followed by two 7-week half terms over the spring and summer months. I would like to thank you once again for your continued support, particularly helping our students adopt to home learning. I know that you will want to join me in thanking the entire staff team here at Caedmon College and Whitby Sixth Form. Our teaching staff, at very short notice, have had to embrace 'live' teaching, developing their skills and pedagogy as they have gone through the term. Our teaching assistants have been in the vanguard of supporting those students accessing our on-site provision as they have logged into 'live' lessons alongside their peers working at home. And our admin, technician, site and cleaning staff have continued supporting us all, working either on site or remotely. It has been yet another terrific team effort by everyone!

Yours faithfully

*Simon Riley*

Principal

Monday 22 February 2021