

2nd November 2020

Dear parents and carers

Autumn 2 Half Term – letter to all parents

I hope and pray that this letter finds you well.

We start this new half term in the context of a second national lockdown that will start from this Thursday. However, you will know from the news that **schools are to remain open.**

We know that just as the last half term ended, we start this half term with the continuing risk of significant impact due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We are required to respond immediately to a positive COVID-19 case and this may mean that at short notice we need to send students home and switch to remote learning for a period of time. We will contact you the same day via text and letter if there is a need to do that.

Please be assured that we continue to do all we can to reduce the risk of transmission in school and provide face-to-face teaching for all students as our preferred model. To help achieve that there are a number of areas we are focusing more on this half term:

- All students must have a *clean* mask to wear every day (unless they have a documented exemption).
- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms (however mild), immediately self-isolate them and your household.
- Immediately book a test (NHS, ring 119) and ensure your household continues to isolate.
- Increased expectations of handwashing/hand sanitisation around the school at break, lunchtime and when entering and leaving the canteen.
- If anyone (staff or student) has symptoms they will be required to go home immediately.
- Work will be available on a daily basis via Satchel-One for any students who are self-isolating.

I intend to keep in regular contact with you to keep you up to date with how we are responding to the pandemic situation. It is a fast-moving situation both locally and nationally. Please make sure you let the school know of any changes to your contact details.

You can contact the school any time via our general email address enquiries@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk

To contact us regarding a COVID-19 test result you should use testresult@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk.

We will need to see the outcome of a test – positive or negative – so that we take the right action. Please use the 'test result' email address above for this.

CARING, LEARNING AND SUCCEEDING

Key dates:

- Year 11 are in school as normal from Monday 2nd November 2020.
- Years 7 to 10 return to school on Wednesday 4th November 2020.
- Year 11 Parents' Evening Wednesday 11th November 2020.
- Year 7 Parents' Evening Monday 9th November 2020.
- Planned school closure (for 1 day): Friday 27th November 2020.
- Last day of term: Friday 18th December 2020.
- Start of spring term: Tuesday 5th January 2021.

Priorities for the half term ahead:

There are three main areas we are focusing on this half term

1. *Safety of students and staff:* doing all we can to reduce the wider transmission and impact of COVID-19.
2. *Learning routines in lessons:* introducing 'cold call' as a questioning technique in all lessons.
3. *Remote learning:* improving access, quality and response to remote learning, including homework.

This is summarised in three words that we use across the school: **Excellence. Expectations. Engagement.**

Sometimes we have to act at very short notice to a positive COVID-19 case - sometimes after school hours. We will do all we can to communicate with you quickly and ensure that we get work posted on Satchel-One as soon as possible for the next school day.

We are focusing in lessons on using a technique called 'cold call'. We will be informing students of this in form time this week and our staff training day on Monday 2 November had it as a main focus. This is to help ensure we have a strong focus on what pupils can and cannot do by using effective questioning in every lesson. It is also stopping any 'calling out', however keen someone is to answer. This is an inclusive approach that encourages all students to take a full and active part in every lesson.

Ensuring the school can run effectively and safely:

I had to take the difficult decision at the end of last half term and for the start of this new half term, that it was not possible to teach all year groups in school at once.

We may need to do this again. It is a tricky balance to strike and at times can only be decided a day in advance. Whilst we can draw on supply teachers to help if a small number of staff cannot be in school there is also the need to balance when the number of supply teachers will affect the smooth and effective running of the school.

My intention is to always keep the school fully open if it is safe to do so.

We will be monitoring the situation on a daily basis and if we are unable to provide an effective level of staffing I may need to once again restrict the number of pupils we have in school for a short period of time.

I hope I can rely on your continuing support in this ongoing and challenging situation.

Yours faithfully,

Kieran Larkin
Headteacher