



MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

HEIDI THURLAND BA (HONS 1ST CLASS) NPQH HEADTEACHER

Dear families,

I wanted to write to you at the end of our first week of remote learning & keyworker provision to update you with some key information and recognise your excellent work and support this week.

Testing in schools – By 6pm on Monday the 4th Jan we had trained 40 staff to deliver mass testing in schools. We re-purposed our sportshall to deliver this. At 8pm the position changed with the national lockdown and schools only being open to a limited number of students. Therefore, at this point we will be running testing for staff on a weekly basis. We will also conduct serial testing with students who attend school if we have a positive case amongst this group of students; we will inform parents of students attending school, please therefore retain your consent forms.

It is very clear that in order to re-open schools fully mass testing will be part of the plan. It cost the school £1000 in postage to ensure families had the correct information so it is essential that consent forms are retained until required. Thank you to those families who have informed us that they do not give permission for testing; we have recorded this.

Yr11GCSE / BTEC examinations – On the 6th January Gavin Williamson made a statement to the House of Commons regarding Yr11 qualifications. A summary of his statement is as follows:

- All summer GCSE examinations are cancelled
- The DfE will trust the profession to award grades and will provide training for school staff to ensure fairness and consistency in the awarding of grades
- The details of assessment are yet to be disclosed as there continues to be consultation on this with Ofqual

We will continue to work with Ofqual, we will train our staff accordingly, we will engage at every level with consultation around this and we will do everything in our power to ensure our students are awarded grades that accurately reflect their ability. We will communicate the process with you as and when we know more.

We were set to run an OCR PE exam on Monday 9am, I have taken the difficult decision to cancel this due to safety concerns. I have written to all OCR students and families to explain this rationale.

We will shortly be sending Yr11 internal exam results home to students. Please be aware this grade is **NOT an indication of a GCSE result** it is simply a reflection of performance at the time. We do not yet know what the evidence base will be for awarding GCSE grades. We do know however that many schools had not planned mocks until this half term. So, in the same way as last summer, it is unlikely that the mock grade will be the definitive piece of evidence used to award GCSE grading.

Performance in mock exams varies significantly, we anticipate that a range of evidence will be required. We will of course go through this with Yr11 students once we know more about the process.

Google Classrooms support – Thanks to all who have contacted school with queries regarding google classrooms. We are working through these with our ICT team. Our staff continue to receive training on this. Some of our staff are a little nervous about delivering live lessons because they are desperate to get it right. Please be a little patient with us as we fully adjust to teaching ‘face to face’ online. Our teaching staff are meeting on Friday 8th Jan at 2pm for a training session to reflect on lessons learned from the first week of remote delivery. We are keen to ensure a consistent approach for every lesson and will be working hard with staff to achieve this. Next week we will circulate further guidance to you to support FAQ we have supported this week.

Staff Capacity - It is important that families are aware that many of our staff have young families, some are shielding / caring for vulnerable members of their household. We also have some staff who sadly have contracted the virus or have members within their household who have done so this week. Our staff are also working from home with variable WiFi which as we all know impacts on the quality of live lessons. Therefore our staff will work tirelessly to provide the best education they can according to their circumstances. We will be offering a range of remote learning options from set work to live or recorded lessons. If a member of staff is unable to deliver a live lesson that was scheduled please understand there will be a significant reason for this. The senior team & pastoral teams are tracking the quality of education and student engagement and we will act quickly if we feel we are not meeting our own high expectations. I would ask that especially in the first two weeks of this lockdown you exercise some patience, some staff may not schedule work to appear until the lesson itself – we have done this so students do not feel overwhelmed. This means that when students log on in some cases they may only see lesson 1 has been set, the rest will follow through the day. If over a number of days your child is not receiving work then please contact our admin team and we will quickly resolve any issues.

Yr9 Options Process – We had planned to undertake a rigorous options process for our Yr9 students in order to select their GCSE qualifications. Whilst we will amend the delivery mechanism for this we will be implementing this process from the 18th January. More information will be sent home next week regarding this.

Expectations for working from home - In our last lock down we were delighted with how well the majority of our students engaged with remote learning. We are looking to further build on this success and are committed to working with families to ensure all students are kept safe, engage effectively in remote learning with all students having regular contact with their school tutor.

Students will be asked to fully engage with the online learning set for completion at home. In line with DfE expectation a minimum 4 hours of work for the day is scheduled. Consideration is given to families who are needing to share ICT resources therefore the deadlines are not definitive i.e. some flexibility for completion of work is acceptable. (We found that some students are worried if tasks are not completed but we need to be both ambitious and realistic to balance work completion and student wellbeing). If a student is not well enough to complete work please let their tutor know and we can communicate this to their teachers.

The **new home timetable** from 11th January sets out to:

- provide 5 minute daily contact check in with school via their tutor between **8.40 & 9.30am** each morning (timing will be according to each tutor’s capacity/availability in that period). This is a good chance to flag any issues with google classrooms / work / welfare
 - Students should all log in through google classrooms on their computers, smart phones, tablets etc to register with their tutor **at the time allocated (between 8.40-9.30am)**

- Tutors will be in touch with parents and carers if students are not registering at this time
- Periods **1 & 5** will always be **independent** work set by the teacher
- Periods **2-4** will be a blend of **live lessons, pre-recorded tutorials** and independent work
 - Live lessons can be accessed through computers, smart phones, tablets and even the Xbox and PlayStation using their internet facility in APPS (Must declare an advisory here though as these devices may become a distraction!)
- **Every Friday at 1pm** tutors will schedule an extended form time to check-in with students, advise them of support that can be accessed and answer any questions that students may have.

Progress Evenings - We are currently introducing a new online platform for school/parent consultation called SchoolCloud. There is information on our website about how it can be used effectively for parents to meet Middlewich staff online. We will further communicate dates for parents and tutors to meet over the period of lockdown.

ICT Access and internet access - Should you need assistance with the provision of any laptops, to allow your child to access regular online learning, or if you are struggling with remote learning please contact admin@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk to explain what you might require and we will try to assist. The DfE is working with the following phone providers at present to offer data to support access to educational websites/remote learning:

- Three
- Smarty
- Virgin Mobile
- EE
- Tesco Mobile
- Sky mobile

Other phone providers may join in due course. If you have an issue with internet access itself please contact admin and we will see if are able to apply for data on your behalf.

Rewarding Student Work - Students engaging well at home with their work will again be recognised with **excellence certificates**, awarded by class teachers, Heads of Department and the Headteacher! Please can I ask that you send us photos of students with their certificates, work they are proud of or tell us about something they are doing for their community to eatkin-nash@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk and we can celebrate pride collectively. We will then share these within our community via social media as long as we have family permission. It is fantastic to see so many students being recognised for their efforts and attitudes to working from home and it keeps all of our spirits up!

Academy Conversion Consultation – At the end of last term we submitted our Academy order. This begins the process of moving MHS from an LA maintained school to an Academy within the Sir John Brunner Foundation. We now begin a six week period of consultation with stakeholders. During this time families can email our Academy email to ask questions about the Academy conversion and the Trust we will be working with. We will respond to individual emails and also collate information for all families to ensure you are fully aware of the rationale and implications for conversion. To reassure families I am delighted that the Governors have agreed the resolution to convert and join the Foundation. The Governors and I believe this partnership will only strengthen our school and improve the quality of education for our students.

To find out more about the Sir John Brunner Foundation you can visit their website: <https://sirjohnbrunnerfoundation.co.uk>. This will give you an overview of the values and ethos of the Trust and awareness of the other schools who are currently part of the Trust. We anticipate conversion to take place on Sept 1st 2021. I will write to you through the term to keep you informed. The outcome of the consultation will be communicated to all stakeholders at the end of this half term.

Finally I want to say a massive thanks to every single student, parent, carer and staff member. We have once again demonstrated our courage, adaptability and resilience as a community. The messages of support and thanks from the community have really warmed our hearts – thank you! We have challenges ahead but I have every confidence our community will continue to thrive, continue to learn and we will do this together.

I will endeavour to lead with clarity, purpose and calmness ensuring the best level of support and quality of education we can possibly deliver for our students - We've got this.

Keep learning!

Best wishes to you all,

Heidi Thurland



Headteacher Middlewich High School
Excellence in Learning – Achievement for All

Useful emails:

admin@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk - general enquires/ICT support/data support

academy@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk – enquires regarding academy conversion

eatkin-nash@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk – social media posts / recognition of student work