

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

25th March 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In some ways it feels as if we returned to school just two minutes ago; in other ways, it feels like we have been back for months! Either way, I am utterly delighted by the way the return to school has been enabled so smoothly thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our staff (especially those involved in testing), the cooperation of our students and the support of you, our parents. Without exception, every student I have spoken to has been thrilled to be back and, with great maturity, they have accepted and complied with all our control measures as the means by which we are enabled to be here. I couldn't have asked for a better or smoother return.

Testing During Easter

The Government has requested that all students and staff continue with their twice-weekly testing regime throughout the Easter holiday. In order to manage this, all students will be sent home with a sufficient number of

tests to see them through the holiday period. We advise testing on Wednesdays and Sundays and would ask that a test is taken on the morning of the return to school. All students participating in the scheme will already have a

Test and Trace account on which to log their results and it is important they do so as this provides important information on the national spread of the virus.

Household Bubble Tests

All households which include a school-age child or a household member who works in a school, college or nursery

setting is entitled to participate in twice weekly testing. Testing kits can be accessed by following the instructions on

the Household Bubble website which can be found [here](#).



International Student Return

We have greatly missed seeing those international students for whom it would have been either impossible or

impractical to return prior to Easter. I would like to remind all international families of the need to follow the most recent

quarantine and travel advice which can be found [here](#). Please check regularly because it changes often.

Summer Assessment for Years 11 and 13

As you will be aware, the Government has cancelled GCSE and A level (and equivalent) exams in England and will instead rely on Teacher Assessed Grades based on evidence. Here at The Purcell School, each department will build a portfolio of up to 6 “data-points” to evidence their eventual grades. Assessments and data collection will take place during next half term, will be managed within academic departments and will be held largely within class time. Assessments do not equate to exams (nor is there any requirement for them to); indeed, it is unlikely that subjects will require students sit a lengthy formal exam in a traditional sense (unless there is no alternative) preferring to rely on a mixture of shorter classroom assessments and other activity such as essays or similar prescribed tasks that can be completed within and between lessons – rather like coursework. In some subject areas, coursework has already been completed (or largely completed) and in such cases staff may elect to use this as evidence. In all cases, assessments will only include material the students have

been taught, will only include topics that would feature in the applicable subject syllabus, will be in the “style” of previous examination materials (using past paper questions, exam board material or questions devised to mirror these) and will be marked using the appropriate exam board mark scheme. Students will always know in advance which assessments will constitute a “data point” and they will always be given reasonable notice of any assessments and/or assessed work. Students will also be informed of the result of each assessment.

Following the completion of assessments, the collection of data and the allocation of projected grades, there will be an internal cross-moderation exercise within and (in some cases) between departments. Beyond this, the Deputy Principal and myself (as Head of Centre) will test samples of marking from across all subjects to check for consistency of approach. Once this has been completed, we will then submit grades; centres are not permitted to share grade information.

Further official guidance is to be issued in the next week or so, but this will not change our general approach which will be to try to manage this period without causing undue anxiety amongst students, to provide the best opportunity for them to perform at their best and to gather sufficient evidence upon which to make grade submissions with integrity.

Last year, with much less notice, support and formal frameworks in place, staff undertook this with remarkable professionalism and objectivity. I have no doubt the same will be true this year.

Reports

Reports are due to be circulated to parents shortly. Please be advised that staff have not allocated predicted or “working at” grades on any Year 11 or Year 13 report. The reasons for this are simply that at the time the reports

were written, students had only just returned to school, we had very little idea what the summer assessment requirements might be nor the evidence we might need to collate to support teacher assessed grades. The

past three week period has focussed on getting students back into the classroom and appraising what they have internalized during lockdown and addressing any resulting “gaps”.

Fees

As promised the Governors have reviewed the fee position. Their proposed position is

now with the Department for Education awaiting approval. A letter from the Chair of

Governors will be sent to parents as soon as the DfE respond.

Staff

We are sorry to say goodbye to a number of staff at the end of term.

Miss Gilman-Abel is moving on to pursue further study. We thank her for all she has done to support boarding and enable more sport in the school. I know how much students have enjoyed the activities Miss Gilman-Abel has facilitated and we will be sorry to see her go.

Mr Box has been with us for two terms in Maths providing maternity cover. I know

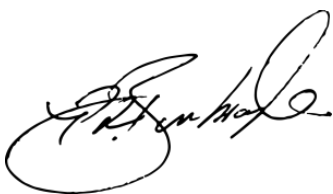
that both students and staff alike have valued having an experienced and skilful teacher “holding the fort” during this time. I know that he has enjoyed the musical life of the school and students have appreciated seeing him at their lunchtime concerts.

Mrs Tagoe-Torkornoo is moving on to take up a senior leadership position. As Senior Houseparent in NBH, her impact has been immense and she hands on a happy, caring, well-disciplined house to her successor. I know how much

the students of NBH are going to miss her and I know how grateful they are for all she has brought to their home life here at school.

We wish all three colleagues success and happiness in the future.

With all good wishes for an enjoyable Easter Break,



Paul Bambrough
Principal

