



ULVERSTON VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL



Springfield Road, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0EB

Telephone: 01229 483900

Web: www.uvhs.uk E-mail: uvhs@uvhs.uk

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Hardwick B.A. (Hons), N.P.Q.H.

Deputy Headteachers: Mrs Susan Hewson B.A. (Hons), N.P.Q.H., Mrs Alessandra Desbottes M.A. (Oxon)

Our Ref: MHa/AJH

An exceptional school at the heart of the community

12th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Throughout the pandemic I have attempted, and only you can judge how successfully I have been, to communicate as clearly as possible what is happening and what is going to happen.

The first of these is straightforward, we have settled into a pattern of home education which is the best we can achieve. We have been keen to do as much on line teaching as possible, a principle only compromised by teachers' personal circumstances, and one which I think has been well received. Consequently, if anything, more ground has been covered than normally expected. I have chosen my words carefully here as even though the teaching staff have shown a commitment to developing this completely new way of delivering their lessons in a manner that goes far beyond what is reasonable to expect; it can never be the same as having the children in front of us. The response to being taught at home from parents and students has been exceptional and the vast majority are engaging well. Consequently, in this school, for the majority of our students, in our professional judgement, there is no massive attainment gap as portrayed by our more alarmist media; and certainly we are confident that what gap exists we will be able to close as normality returns, so try not to worry. It is true that children's holistic experience of education has been marred and the warmth generated by all the activities, trips and general life of the school, but this will return when normality does.

As you are aware, we have responded to feedback to concerning screen time by reducing the length of lessons and suspending homework for Key Stage 3 students, replacing this with enrichment activities. This has been well received by parents, students and teachers, lessons are sharper and more effective, screen time has been reduced and wellbeing improved. Counterintuitively the amount of learning has also increased; so we are going to extend the concept until the children return. In order to meet the request by some parents for extension work we have added more academic activities to the enrichment programme on a page on our website called Academic Enrichment.

We have tried to keep as much of the normal school day as we can, with registration, tutor period and assemblies. Our pastoral leaders have rung many of our students to talk through on line learning, provide support and to keep vital contact. Not everyone needs this but if you want to speak to someone, please contact school. Parents' evenings have happened via computers, by necessity, but may stay due to preference, with many parents commenting that they are an improvement. We will do induction evenings for Year 6 into Year 7 and 11 into the Sixth Form the same way.

We are planning for next year, with the hope of a normal timetable and normal choices for students, so we have worked through Year 8 and Year 9 options using online support, not ideal as you will appreciate but generally successful, however parents with children in these year groups should contact the school if they are concerned about their choices.



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Possible return to the classroom

This brings me to my second premise, what is going to happen next? We have been told that March 8th is the earliest possible return date. However, we are awaiting the government's plan. We do not know if there will be a rota system with some year groups in and others at home, nor what Lateral Flow Tests will be undertaken, though it is important to complete the online consent form. It is of course possible that there will be an insistence on increased Health and Safety measures.

Years 11 and 13

We are hoping that we will be able to bring in students in exam years soon. We do not know how these children will be assigned GCSE and A level grades this summer. We are working on the assumption that it will be a combination of centre assessed grades and some sort of moderating exam in each subject. Therefore, it is important that students continue to work hard in all years, but vital for Years 11 and 13 so that we will be able to ensure they are given the grades that they deserve and need. For example, if a student needs a Grade 4 in English and Maths as a requirement for entry to an apprentice, this is the time to produce the evidence by working hard. This will not be about students just being given their target, or a grade from one assessment or report, but a grade for which the child has shown consistently is correct. We will be challenged by the exam board on the integrity of the system. There was grade inflation last summer, the government is very keen that it will not happen this year.

I am sorry where I have been vague, we will tell you what is happening as soon as we know. It just remains for me thank you for your continued support and kind words. This is not easy for anyone, but I have to say the teachers, students and parents of Ulverston Victoria High School have dealt with the challenges in a calm, steadfast manner which you will look back on with pride in the years to come.

Thank you.

Matt Hardwick
Headteacher

