

14<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear parents and carers,

What a brilliant week it's been, welcoming back all our staff and students to the school site for the first time since we broke up for the Christmas holidays almost three months ago!

After weeks of remote learning and virtual meetings, it's been wonderful to see real classrooms with actual students in them, being taught lessons in person!

Thank you to the vast majority of parents for ensuring that your child has returned to school punctually, ready to learn and in uniform – we know that, for some of you, there are particular challenges in making this happen, and we do appreciate your efforts. As previously stated, please get in touch with your child's PSO if you are facing any issues or are unsure of our policy – they will be pleased to assist you.

Years 5 and 6 returned to the classroom on Monday and, by about 9.30am, it was like we'd never been away! Lots of smiles, lots of learning and it was lovely to hear the industrious noise of two hundred children enjoying being back in the building.

Our students in years 7 and above have been absolutely wonderful in following the guidance that will keep us all safe – sanitising hands, maintaining social distancing and wearing face coverings indoors [including classrooms]. The asymptomatic testing this week has gone more smoothly than we could have imagined, starting with the first tests on Monday at school, Widdrington and Hadston [by the way, it was lovely to have the chance to meet and chat to so many of you at Hadston House].

Key stage 3 had their second test on Thursday morning, with our older students taking their tests on Friday morning. Our final tests in school happen this coming Monday and Tuesday and, after that, we will be issuing home test kits to be administered twice a week on a Sunday and Wednesday evening. More details will follow in a letter early next week.

Although cases of coronavirus are falling nationally, we do need to maintain the high level of vigilance and adherence to the procedures we have put in place to ensure the safety of staff, students and families in our community. This means that students must stick to the agreed seating plans in classrooms and on the bus to and from school – that way, should we be unfortunate enough to have a positive test or confirmed case in school, the close contacts who have to self-isolate will be kept to the absolute minimum.

Now we have returned to school and face to face teaching has resumed, I would like to update you on the new procedures should your child need to isolate and access learning from home.

If your child is absent from school their work will be available in the Google classroom from the first day of absence. Students will be expected to follow the same timetable they would follow in school should they be well enough to complete work. We have learned a lot about successful remote learning over the last year so have decided the most effective model for our students is part independent work and part access to live teaching. Students learning from home will therefore join their peers virtually via google classroom for the instructions and explanations of the lesson. They will be then set an independent task to check their understanding, teachers will continue to give feedback to students learning at home. Teachers will inform students via google classroom when they are to join the lesson live.

We know that you appreciated the way that our dedicated staff were able to deliver learning via Google Classroom during the period of home learning. By the same token, our teaching staff have developed a strong set of new skills in using this technology to help our students learn more effectively. When I held assemblies before half term, I asked all year groups how many of them had used the Google Classroom to go back and revisit a lesson to make sure they understood the things they had been taught. The response was overwhelmingly positive – our students are becoming more independent learners through the use of this technology, and our teachers are creating bespoke learning environments that mean absent students don't miss out on their learning, and that every single lesson can be revisited.

In fact, we're so pleased with how everyone has adapted to using this technology that we are looking to use it much more frequently in the future, both in lessons and for homework and revision.

The best model would mean all students having their own personal Chromebook which they would bring to school every day as part of their usual school equipment. We have contacted an IT company that specialises in offering solutions to students and parents by providing the latest Chromebook technology, fully insured with payments spread over time. Look out for more information regarding this scheme – if there is enough uptake, we hope to revolutionise the way learning is delivered across all year groups from September...

Please do keep in touch with us, and make sure you check our Facebook page– it's updated regularly with all the essential information.

If you have any comments or questions, email us – we're always happy to hear from you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Neil Rodgers'.

Neil Rodgers  
Executive Headteacher