



The Featherstone Academy

19 May 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

I sincerely hope that you, your families and friends are well during this exceptionally challenging time.

I am sure you are fully aware that many issues remain uncertain at this time and I wanted to alert you to some potential changes to the school calendar, as and when we receive further guidance from the government about: schools reopening; the situation regarding Year 10 in terms of their examinations in 2021, and what that will look like, and proposed changes to the dates of examinations in 2021. We wanted to make you aware of these so that you do not book holidays or make plans which may clash with these potential changes. I will try to go through these possible changes as clearly as possible point by point.

Schools reopening

At the moment we are awaiting firm guidance regarding plans for the further easing of lockdown and a possible phased return of students to school. In the event of this, we have already put together a number of strategies and detailed plans to try to ensure that we could do so safely. At this point in time it is envisaged that Year 10 would be our priority due to them sitting public examinations in 2021. They would not all be able to attend at the same time as we could not maintain social distancing with large numbers in the school building, and we could only safely have a small number of children in a classroom at any time. As when we know more, we will of course share this with you.

Changes to examinations 2021

Furthermore, the exam boards have provisionally moved their exam schedule back a week in **2021**. Consequently, where in previous years our later half-term fell when all the major exams have been completed, in 2021, during our proposed half-term the core subjects of GCSE Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History and Geography have examinations timetabled for that week by the exam boards. Clearly this has alarmed us and we felt that we should communicate this to you as soon as possible as it is crucial that students are present for these examinations. Exams are later than usual, due to the May Bank Holiday changing, Local Authority half term changing and results day being a week later than in previous years, consequently. **It is therefore proposed that we move our half-term back a week to the w/c 21 June, 2021** when there is GCSE Physics Paper 2. I realise that again, this may impact on holiday plans.

Tuesday 29 June, 2021 will be a 'contingency day' for all exam boards in the UK. In line with Ofqual's exam system contingency plan. This is an additional day at the end of the exam period. It will only be used in the event of major local or national disruption to summer 2021 exams, in which case it is possible that timetable dates could be affected up to and including the contingency day. **Students will need to make sure that they are available until 29 June 2021.**

Proposals for 2021 examinations for current Year 9 and Year 10

As I am sure you are aware there is a great deal of speculation about what may happen to Year 10 as they move into Year 11 to sit their GCSEs, given the time that they may have missed in school. As yet we have no guidance from the government or OFQUAL but will most certainly let you know as soon as we do.

I appreciate this is a worrying time for parents, carers and students alike. We would obviously encourage students to keep working remotely and to keep up with their studies at this time. Furthermore, our Year 9 students will be sitting their 1 Year GCSEs next year so, they will also have to be aware of the revised examination dates. Please contact us if you have any concerns or questions.

Can I stress that, as a school, we are responding to ever changing situations and we are endeavouring to keep you as fully informed as possible whilst doing so. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought exceptional challenges to us all and we are trying to make the right decisions for our students – your children, and you, as best we can.

We recognise the frustrations that the current situation and these potential changes, outlined above, will bring and fully empathise with them. Many of you will have had to cancel holidays this Easter and/or summer; you will be keen to think with optimism towards the future and spending time with family and friends that you have missed, and may be eager to book a holiday for next year to give you and your family something to look forward to. Our teachers and support staff are feeling exactly the same.

There are also some uncertainties as to what a return to school will look like in September, depending on how the Government recovery plan progresses. We would like, therefore, to highlight that there is a possibility that the **October 2020 half term may be impacted**. Please note that we will follow any Government guidance that it issued. By giving you this information we hope that it will help you make appropriate plans.

Please note, therefore our June 2021 half term will now be from **Monday 21 June – Friday 25 June 2021** inclusive.

It is an uncertain time and we will do our utmost to keep you informed and work with you to do the best that we can for our young people, now, and moving forward.

Yours sincerely



Mr W Bush
Head of School