

6th January 2021



Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you and your families are all safe and well at this time. I am writing to touch base on several matters today.

I wanted to begin by thanking you for all the positive comments and messages of support we have received in school, as we move into remote learning once more. As always, our Light Hall students are taking the sudden change to provision in their stride. The participation in remote lessons yesterday was excellent in all year groups. Thank you for your support at home, we understand that it is not always easy!

Our staff have, as always, approached their change in working circumstances with great enthusiasm and we are developing better and improved methods of delivery on a daily basis. I am sure that you will join me in thanking them for everything that they continually do to support our children. IT presents a significant challenge both from an infrastructure aspect and from the point of view of student access at home.

At the moment each of your child's teachers is available online through TEAMS for each of your child's lessons, they can communicate through the chatroom and post functions, but our network and broadband are currently not sufficient to allow us to move to live video teaching, where your child can see their teacher in action, for all classes in the school at the same moment in time. This is being addressed and we hope to be able to rollout more of this style of lesson, to our examination year groups in the first instance, from Monday. We are aiming to share all relevant policy changes with parents and expectations of students by the end of the week. Mr Hayfield will share a range of video tutorials, outlining the use of 'live' lessons in due course. If, for any reason such as sickness etc, your child's subject teacher is unable to deliver a "live" lesson, the lesson will still happen, supported by recorded materials and the online chatroom function.

We fully appreciate how difficult it is to supervise your child's use of TEAMS, if you, too, are working from home or are a key worker and are at work, but we do ask you to encourage your child to log into their registration TEAM by 9.05am each morning and then to each of their normal timetabled lesson TEAMS, apart from core PE, at the normal time. Period 5 lessons begin at 2.00pm. To support you and all our students, pastoral staff are monitoring attendance at remote lessons daily and are ringing home or emailing if it is evident that a child has not attended their remote lesson. Mr Hayfield will be able to respond to any queries you have regarding the use of TEAMS, his email is nhayfield@lighthall.co.uk.

Student access is problematic. Despite government press releases about laptops for those who do not have them, this, in reality, is not the situation. We have distributed all the government laptops we were allocated, (a much lower number than suggested by the media) in addition to any available devices we had in school. So, I now find myself having to ask if any parents/carers are able to donate any laptops/tablets, which have internet capability, and which they no longer need, to school, for refurbishment by our IT technicians and for redistribution to students, whom it would really benefit. We have already received some donations and for those, I am very grateful. If you are able to help, please email office@lighthall.co.uk. Thank you.

I am also very grateful for the response to our recruitment letter for support with mass testing. We received over 100 responses overnight. With the closure of schools this programme is currently on hold, although the testing of staff and those students who are accessing our critical worker and vulnerable student provision is continuing.

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I will be sending a further letter to you about this which will contain a consent form. I would be grateful, if you could complete this and return it so that we will be ready and prepared to launch this programme of mass testing, when all students are allowed to return to school.

I am sure that you will have heard the announcement that it will not be possible for all exams to go ahead as normal this summer, and that the government will work with Ofqual and examination boards on alternative arrangements.

I feel for all our year 11 students preparing for GCSEs this summer. At this moment, there is clearly a sense of uncertainty and a lack of clarification as to what is expected. We wrote to parents of year 11 students yesterday, outlining our plans for the mock examinations which were due to take place this week and next. We anticipate further information imminently from the Department for Education as regards the alternative arrangements being made for the summer. The key point for all our students in every year group to remember is that we continue to work towards the completion of their courses and programmes of study. We must continue to forge ahead. We are here to support as best we can.

I appreciate the amount of information you are receiving may be overwhelming, and it appears to change, literally, overnight. I am attempting to minimise the amount of information I "bombard" you with, but I am also aware that these are anxious times for us all, so information, when we have it, that which is useful, will be passed to you.

The school website www.lighthall.co.uk is updated regularly, so please use that resource, if you are unsure. Our office email is being monitored during the school day and office staff are available to take telephone calls. If you have any queries or concerns, please get in touch.

Whilst we have a difficult term ahead of us, I remain optimistic. We know that our students, staff and indeed our entire Light Hall community have been through this experience before. We have learned lessons from those experiences, seen our children develop their independence and resilience and have watched with pride as many have added value to their communities and shown very genuine care for others. We go in to this lockdown with the extremely positive news that there are now two vaccines currently being rolled out in the UK to the wider population. This gives us genuine hope that the end is in sight.

So, thank you for your continued support. Please pass on my very best wishes to your children. We all miss them and their very good company. I look forward to seeing them again as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Annette Kimblin
Headteacher