

5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Government announcement

I apologise for yet another email following the email sent yesterday. However, as you will be aware, at 8pm last night, the government announced yet another change to education with immediate effect from today.

Until last night Year 11 were due to return w/c 11 January and all other students w/c 18 January. As such, over the holidays and yesterday, teachers prepared online lessons to be delivered over the next two weeks in line with students' normal timetables.

Last night it was announced that students in all year groups will not return to school until after February half term (at the earliest).

The online lessons that the teachers have already planned will continue for the next two weeks.

Over the next couple of days the Senior Leadership Team will be reviewing how learning will look from Monday 18 January. We will be looking at how we deliver live lessons using Google Meet, alongside a variety of other interactive resources. We are already committed to providing instant feedback in each remote lesson and we are now looking at how we can set formal assessments and provide written feedback, in line with our 'in school' policy to ensure that students receive the same amount of written feedback as they would do normally.

We will also be working on how we can modify timetables to work to maximum effect for all students, and how we can incorporate regular welfare checks with every student starting from w/c 18 January.

Please bear with us as these changes were only announced late last night but we aim to share more details about our plans with parents/carers by the end of this week.

A message to our Year 11 students (and their parents/carers)

Last night the government announced that the GCSE examinations would not take place as planned this summer. They have not yet announced how GCSE grades will be awarded. We will be in touch with those students who are taking BTEC examinations as there are different plans to continue the exams due to take place in January.

I know that many of you will be feeling very upset and anxious about this, as we do as your teachers. The vast majority of Year 11 students have been working relentlessly since their return in September, and throughout Year 10, to prepare for these exams. Their teachers have been working alongside them to manage the changes that were introduced earlier in the year and to ensure that our students were in the best position for their exams.

I also know how very proud we are of you all and how well you have responded to all the challenges that you have faced and I'm sure that your parents and carers feel the same way.

The government and exam boards have not yet given us any details of how they will award the results and what role the school will have in these decisions/outcomes. We will be in touch with you as soon as we have any information at all.

In the meantime all Year 11 students should continue to complete the work set by their teachers as we may be asked to set internal assessments of some sort. You have been incredibly resilient throughout this unsettling time; please continue to remain optimistic and be reassured that we will make sure we do the best that we can for you.

Critical worker and vulnerable children attending school

The purpose of the increased restrictions is to reduce the spread of coronavirus in the community by minimising contact between people, including children. However, as in previous lockdowns, the government has determined that children of critical workers are able to attend school in person **if this is necessary to allow their parents to continue working and they are unable to learn safely at home**. In order to minimise risk of transmission to children, their families, staff and the wider community we would ask you to satisfy yourself that this provision is necessary before requesting a place.

A list of jobs included in the definition of critical workers can be found on the government website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

If this applies to you and you require a place for your child, please contact the school using this email: criticalworker@millthorpe.southbank.academy

We will ask you to verify your request by providing appropriate proof from your employer. This provision will need to be requested in advance and we would ask for five days' notice to plan the provision. School will be in touch with those parents and carers who have already requested places and parents/carers of vulnerable children.

Note that all students attending school will follow the same online learning activities as children staying home; they will be supervised in groups by non-teaching staff in a PC room.

Free School Meals

We will continue to provide vouchers to families of children eligible for free school meals using the same provider we used over the Christmas holiday. Eligible children attending school will be able to get a free lunch from the canteen as usual.

Support with IT

The school has been allocated some additional Chromebooks by the DfE and we will use the results of the IT survey we carried out earlier in the year to prioritise which children we give these to. If there are other children who are struggling to access online learning, we will look into how we may be able to help.

Remember that students can email us via googlepassword@millthorpe.southbank.academy if they need their Google password resetting.

As always, we will continue to keep you updated as and when we have any further information to share with you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Greenhalgh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ms G Greenhalgh
Head of School