

Dear Parents,

As during the first lockdown I will endeavour to keep parents fully informed about developments relating to COVID 19 and how this affects the school community. The changing national picture has necessitated a review of our [COVID 19 risk assessment](#) and this can be found by following the link.

Critical Workers Provision

Again my thanks to parents for minimising the use of [critical workers](#) provision. Keeping the numbers of pupils in school manageable means the teaching staff are able to continue to focus on providing high quality distance learning for all. If any other parents qualify and need this provision they should contact infantadmin@ohgs.co.uk for the Infants provision, juniorsadmin@ohgs.co.uk for the Juniors, or complete the google form here for [Senior School provision](#). Can I remind parents that the school buses are not running and that pupils attending need to bring a packed lunch.

Remote Learning

This is now up and running for all relevant year groups and we are grateful for the positive feedback received already on this. We have added more 'live' content in both the Infants and Juniors from the first lockdown. In Senior School we are asking that each pupil checks in with their form tutor at 8.50am each day, as this will help with maintaining a sense of normality and structure.

We are keen to keep refining our practice and feedback is welcome to: Miss Barnett c.barnett@ohgs.co.uk for the Nursery and Infants, Mrs Knott r.knott@ohgs.co.uk for the Juniors and Mr Jones m.jones@ohgs.co.uk for Senior School. Please can I ask for parents' support again in encouraging pupils to get into a good routine early on. Our experience from the spring highlighted the importance of structure.

Mental Health

We are conscious that pupils, staff and parents will once again be finding the restrictions we face difficult. Please do make the relevant pastoral staff aware of pupils who would benefit from additional individual support. Our school counsellors are once again able to provide remote support as they did in the spring. Should your child require support from a school counsellor they can arrange an appointment by emailing counselling@ohgs.co.uk. Senior school pupils should also refer to the Pastoral Classrooms where there are supportive resources published on a regular basis.

Asymptomatic testing for COVID 19

I am pleased to say that due to the superb efforts of key support staff, this is now running. We have begun to test staff who are needed to work in school and will soon be able to test senior school critical workers children who have given consent. This process is overseen by our own qualified School Nurse and our risk assessment for this is [here](#).

I do want us to be in a position to roll this out to senior school pupils whenever we are able to welcome them back into school. To that end please can I ask Senior School parents who have not already done so to complete either of the forms below. Thank you to parents who have already done so.

[Mass COVID 19 Testing Consent form](#)

Or:

[Consent refusal form](#)

GCSE and A Levels 2021

I am sure parents and pupils in Years 11 and 13 have been following the press reporting on this, which is not always helpful and likely to heighten anxiety. One national newspaper was reporting over the weekend that students might face 'mini exams' in school in the summer term which would be marked by teachers. Unfortunately, other than confirming that formal exams are not happening this summer the government is yet to provide more concrete information. Ofqual have released a [statement](#) which does not greatly add to our understanding. They will now be consulting with stakeholders and giving more information as soon as they are able to.

They have stressed the following to students taking public examinations this year:

Our message to students is this: please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education. That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going in to their school, college or training provider. This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications. It's important that teachers and students can focus on the knowledge and skills needed to equip students to progress to the next stage, whatever form that might take – whether to college, an apprenticeship, university or employment.

I would echo this. At present we do intend to carry out trial examinations but aim to do so when we are able to bring students into school.

Senior School Entrance Examination

I apologise for the delay in announcing our alternative arrangements for our Year 7 Entrance Examination. We are keen to ensure (a) that our arrangements are as COVID secure as possible and (b) fairness for all applicants. The school's Governing body have been discussing the best way forward, and I am attending a meeting of other North West Independent School Heads tomorrow at which this will be discussed. We will outline our arrangements later this week.

Finance

I would ask any parents suffering financial hardship as a result of this lockdown to get in touch with hardshipfund@ohgs.co.uk. There is a limited amount of support available in these circumstances and, as before, we would ask for detailed financial information in order to assess the level of assistance. Parents with short term issues with regards to cash flow should contact billing@ohgs.co.uk. Once again we are very grateful for the support of parents in paying their invoices at this difficult time.

And Finally

As in the first lockdown, we will do our best to stay connected to pupils, staff and parents. Please do follow our social media channels on Facebook and Twitter @OhgsPrincipal. I will continue to post video assemblies which parents can watch if they wish. Here is my [Senior School New Year assembly](#). Please don't feel obliged though; there will not be a test on them!

The news at present makes for grim reading but I am hopeful that this lockdown will be much shorter with the roll out of vaccines and the ability to carry out asymptomatic testing in schools. I do hope that we will be returning in the second half of this term. In the meantime I am grateful once again for the resilience of staff and pupils, and the support of our parents.

Yours sincerely,

CJD Mairs
(Principal)