

## COVID-19 Updates from Mr Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

25<sup>th</sup> March - Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As we rapidly approach the end of another week I write with some updates.

### **COVID-19 pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic starts to accelerate in our region and community, I hope this email finds you safe and well. If you are suffering with COVID-19 symptoms or, indeed, have tested positive I hope your symptoms aren't too severe and wish you a speedy recovery.

There are number of points I'd like to cover within this section

Out of hours email address: [covidhelp@consettacademy.org.uk](mailto:covidhelp@consettacademy.org.uk)

I'd like to remind you that we have set up a dedicated email address for you to use to let us know if your child tests positive for COVID-19 or if you have any related concerns around COVID-19.

Please use this email rather than emailing your child's Year Manager. You should use this email Monday to Friday: 4.00pm – 8.00am and at weekends between Friday 4.00pm – Monday 8.00am. During the working week you can, of course, contact in the usual way.

Unfortunately, some misinformation has been circulated on social media recently around school closure. I would like to re-enforce how we will inform you of positive cases and whether your child is affected. **You will either receive a phone call, a text or a letter via your child or through the post. These are the only ways you will be informed.**

### Face coverings

I am pleased to say that the vast majority of our students provide their own mask and wear them at the appropriate times. I am happy to accept that students sometimes forget their mask or need a gentle reminder to wear it, however, there are a small minority who either *repeatedly* do not bring their own mask to school or who **openly** refuse to wear the mask, the latter being something I cannot understand. As you would want me to do, we take a robust line in these cases. Could I please urge you to ensure your son or daughter has a mask each morning and that they understand why they must wear it in communal areas of the Academy.

### Staffing

You will be aware that over the last 10 days we have had several cases of people testing positive for COVID-19 and have had to send students and staff home. In addition, we have staff who are self-isolating at home for a period of time as they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. This week it has put considerable strain on our staffing and we have had to buy in a number of short-term supply teachers to supervise classes whilst the main class teacher remotely teaches the class via Microsoft Teams. Again, most of our students readily accept the situation and respond with maturity and respect, but not all do. Could I ask you to reinforce to you child the importance for their sake and for the sake of all the other children in the class that they act sensibly during these sessions.

### **Traffic congestion outside school gates**

As I am sure you are aware, Ashdale Road gets very busy and congested in the morning (although our current staggered arrival is helping) and particularly in the afternoon. Last week we had a near miss between a car and one of our members of staff. If you are dropping your son or daughter off in the morning or picking them up in the afternoon could I ask you and your child to

be extra vigilant around the Academy's busy roads. The last thing we need at the moment is a road traffic accident.

### **Finally.....**

We have had reports over the past couple of weeks where there have been incidents of antisocial behaviour in Consett involving our students. We are working closely with the local police to identify the culprits. We take a firm line on this behaviour within school and regularly make presentations to our students around this issue and the need for good citizenship. Could I ask you to reiterate this message to your child(ren) and for you to keep any eye out so that between us we can keep the streets safe for everyone.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Monday 28th September

Dear Parent/Carer

Firstly, I would like to thank you very much indeed for your continued support with this term's arrangements. I understand that life for our students and families at the moment continues to be full of uncertainty and inconvenience, and are therefore very grateful for the fact that the vast majority of our students are arriving at school well-prepared and ready to work. We are genuinely pleased and encouraged by the positivity, maturity and cooperation we are seeing from them as we go about our daily life in school.

There are some updates to bring to your attention this week:

#### **1. Uniform Changes: Week beginning Monday 5th October**

Before the summer holiday I wrote:

*However, we do understand that the current situation may lead to some families not being able to buy the blazer and/or PE top for the beginning of term due to sizing or financial reasons. Therefore, for the first month we will not strictly enforce our uniform code. Students will have until Monday 5 October to buy the school blazer and/or the school PE top. **All students will be expected to have the correct trousers or skirt, shirt and shoes and for PE we would expect them to have blue or black sports leggings or trousers accompanied with a plain white, blue or black t-shirt.***

*A reminder that jewellery is not permitted and all 'usual' personal appearance expectations remain in place.*

Therefore, **from Monday 5 October** we expect all students to be in full school uniform. On the days when your child has PE they should wear their school PE kit. Items with logos are not permitted. As a compromise we are allowing Consett Academy logo hoodies to be worn but **only on days when the students have PE.**

#### **2. Homework**

To allow students a period of re-engagement with normal routines, we have introduced homework gradually over the last few weeks. This week students in Year's 9 - 11 should receive homework from all their subjects with students in Year's 7 - 8 receiving it from their core subjects plus an additional subject. This list will be increased until all subjects are represented by October

half term. I am sure you agree this is a fair compromise, allowing students to gradually get back into the swing of working without immediately overwhelming them.

### **3. Recovery curriculum**

Regardless of the year group, your child has been carefully re-introduced to live, in person, teaching. As part of this we have been looking to see where they have gaps in their knowledge and understanding and the level of catch up that is required to get them back up to speed. Straight after the October half term break we will be sending out information to parents/carers of children in Year's 7-11 to let you know how your child has settled back into their school routines, where we believe they stand in their learning and what they need to do to catch up. If your child is in Year's 12 or 13, we will contact you separately.

As always, if you have any question just get in touch.

Best wishes, Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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22nd September

Dear Parent/Carer

As I write this message today, I'm looking out onto the Academy car park where, 4 hours ago it was a bright, sunny and warm late summer morning, dark clouds have now formed bringing a robust wind. Have we gone from late summer to early Autumn in a day? I hope this is not an omen for COVID-19.

Vladimir Lenin said, "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen."

Last Thursday I wrote to you informing that from Friday 18 September, we all had to wear face coverings moving around communal areas in school where it's difficult to maintain social distancing. Since then further restrictions have been imposed both locally and nationally. I suspect, by the time the week is up other changes will have been announced. Blink and you risk missing another change.

In terms of the Academy, I have a couple of updates that I hope will help communication and prepare us all for remote teaching and learning.

#### **COVID-19 dedicated email address**

Shortly, we are going to create a dedicated email address for you to use to let us know if your child tests positive for COVID-19 or if you have any related concerns around COVID-19. Please use this email rather than emailing your child's Year Manager. You should use this email Monday to Friday: 4.00pm – 8.00am and at weekends between Friday 4.00pm – Monday 8.00am. During the working week you can, of course, contact us in the usual way. We will send a text out when this goes live.

#### **Home Learning Support**

We are determined that students will be able to continue to learn regardless of where they are accessing their learning. Our guidelines include expectations of what we'd like your child to do while learning remotely, and how we plan to support you and them. Please see [bit.ly/35XfSgd](https://bit.ly/35XfSgd) for full update.

#### **PE hoodie**

In recognition that the days are getting cooler and students may not wish to wear their blazer over their PE kit, we are offering your child the opportunity to purchase a Consett Academy PE hoodie (full details [bit.ly/2nchlpN](http://bit.ly/2nchlpN) ). This is part of the PE kit and should not be worn instead of normal school uniform on days when students do not have PE.

Once again, I would like to sing the praises of 99% of our young people who have conducted themselves in a mature and exemplary way over the last couple of weeks. We are proud of them – the way they have embraced change and just accepted how the way things have to be.

If there are any further changes that directly affect the school, I will be in touch.

Take care and stay safe.

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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11th September

All our students are now back to school and it's a delight to see them smiling, talking and beginning the process of re-engaging with new routines and their new timetables. As I am sure you are aware, last week, we have had a student test positive for Covid 19 and following the advice from Public Health England had to send two classes of Year 7 students home to self-isolate for 14 days. This is a hugely disappointing start to their secondary school career and extremely inconvenient for their parents and carers but unfortunately we are duty bound to follow the guidance and protect everyone. As we have done throughout the lockdown, lessons will continue for these students online. If you experience any problems with the lessons please get in touch with us.

On a more positive note, I'm proud to say that for the last two days students have acted in an extremely mature and respectful way both to staff and each other in school. They observed their year bubble demarcation and followed instructions for break and lunchtimes. At this early stage we are experiencing one or two teething issues around lunchtimes but are working hard to solve the problems. I would like to reassure parents and carers that we are fully adhering to government guidelines around socially distancing year bubbles and increasing awareness of the importance of keeping ourselves clean and sanitised with an enhanced cleaning programme around the site. Further information can be obtained here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Finally, I would like to ask for your help, as parents and carers, to emphasise the message that when students travel to and from school they should do so in **small groups** and be **respectful to other road and path users**. I would also like to remind you that children are required to wear face coverings on all buses. If they do not follow the basic rules the bus company is likely to remove their entitlement.

Have a good weekend and please do get in touch if you need us.

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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14th July

Dear Parent/Carer

As we move towards the end of term, and our academic year, I look back on a year like no other. On more than one occasion I have been reminded of the famous quote from Martin Luther King Jr, *"If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward"*. From the middle of March our lives were

turned upside down in a way none of us could have imagined. At times many of us I am sure have just had to 'keep moving forward' when perhaps we were not certain what that 'forward' would look like.

In terms of our schools we now know what September will look like, it will be more normal than it has been for quite some time but a 'new normal' that we will all have to get used to and play our part in. As leaders, teachers and support staff, we have to make sure the school site, building and operational processes are as safe as we can make them whilst at the same time returning to teaching in classrooms, laboratories, workshops and on PE grounds. As parents and carers we ask that you support us and emphasise to your son/daughter the need to act responsibly at all times and follow our advice and instruction. As students we ask that they work with us by sharing any concerns or questions they have and re-engage with their classroom teachers to begin the process of active learning once again. Getting back into the routine and rhythm of the school day will not happen overnight but if we all work together for the common aim of getting our young people back into education safely with a positive frame of mind then the quicker they will begin to close the gaps in their learning.

I have written a letter to you all summarising the plans for September – you can find the letter [here](#). However, before the end of the week we will be sending an information booklet out to you (by post and as a link) which sets out in more detail what school life will be like for staff, students and parents/carers in September, particularly around health and safety. I would urge you to give it a good read and ask that you pass it to your son/daughter to read before they start back in September.

At this time of the year we are now accustomed to saying farewell to some staff and welcoming others:

We say goodbye to the following colleagues and wish them well: Mrs Jackson, Ms Jackson, Mrs O'Brien, Mrs Brown, Miss Crow, Miss Richards and Miss Ward.

We welcome the following colleagues and hope they will have a fulfilling and rewarding career with us: Mrs Veide - Vice Principal, Miss Oakley – English, Miss Oldham - English, Mrs Thompson – English, Miss Doyle - English, Mr Davison - Computer Science, Mrs Butler-Calland - Maths, Mr Shaw – Maths, Mr Turton – Maths, Miss Dodds – Maths, Miss Lewell – Science, Mrs Davison – Science, Miss Altaf – Psychology & Sociology and Mrs Lightfoot – Administrator.

As this will be my last 'message to parents/carers' of the term. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the year, particularly as we have been negotiating our way through these unprecedented times, and hope you are able to have some quality time together over the summer with your family and friends.

If anything comes up over the summer that I feel you ought to know before September I will contact you, but if not I will leave you in peace.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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7th July

Dear Parent/Carer

I want to keep today's message short with just two points of interest – one for your children and one for you.

**Message for Year 13 and Year 11 students**

Had this been a normal summer examination season, you would now be finished and enjoying a well-deserved rest. But this summer has been far from normal and has brought with it uncertainty and anxiety for a lot of you who would have been sitting your final exams. Although we plan to hold Results Days' in August for both year groups, with an added celebratory element, I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of all the staff, to say how much you'll be missed and that we're so sorry that you were the 'Corona Kids' (as one Year 11 student put it a few months ago) and have missed out on being able to demonstrate just how brilliant you are, not having the usual farewell in May and having to postpone (or cancel for Year 13) your Proms.

Tomorrow, all Year 11 students will receive a card through the post wishing you every success for the future. We hope you are able to enjoy something of a summer break and look forward to meeting you all in August to hear your stories and catch up. For Year 13 students, we hope to see you all in August to personally wish you luck for the future and help make sure you get the destination you want.

## September 2020

Following the published guidelines from the DfE last Thursday - all children will be returning to school together this coming September. As I am sure you will be aware, this is taking a lot of planning. We are now tasked with moving our Academy back to a position where all students can be taught a near normal timetable, over 1500 in September, in 'year bubbles'. We are still working through the logistics of what we can do safely. Although we are rapidly approaching the summer holiday, I do intend to keep you informed and will write as soon as we have a clear picture of what September will look like.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Wednesday 1st July

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to begin by thanking all the parents and carers who have sent in kind messages of support following the Ofsted report. I feel humbled and am grateful that we have families who have faith in us to make the necessary improvement needed to get our 'Good' badge back.

Students in Year 12 are continuing to attend lessons as per the plan which commenced on 22 June and seem to be getting back into the swing of school pretty quickly albeit for half a day. Year 10 students who have returned to the Academy, from 15 June, and are following a core timetable on alternate days and will continue to do this until the end of term. To these young people I say.....



*"You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."*

In addition to these students, all other Year 10 students have been offered some face to face classroom teaching and those who have accepted this place will return to the Academy on Monday 6 or Tuesday 7 July to follow a core timetable on alternate days. If you haven't yet received a letter but are expecting one, please do get in touch with your child's Year Manager,

Ms K Wynn. For students in other year groups who are not attending the Academy, we have enhanced their learning experience and support through the introduction of live lessons and teacher presented resources. Although we have experienced some technical hitches hopefully we have now been able to overcome them. Early feedback seems to be positive.

As I write, I eagerly await the statement due tomorrow (Thursday) by the Education Secretary regarding arrangements for September. Over the last three days there has been much speculation in the media as to what school will look like for children after the summer holiday – lots of talk of whether all the children will be back together or in year bubbles with blended learning. As soon as we have been able to process and think through what our response is likely to be I will write to you.

If you have any concerns or queries just get in touch.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Thursday 25th June

Dear Parent/Carer

I am sure you will have seen the announcement on Tuesday by the Prime Minister that all children will be back to school in September. We know the ambition of the government is 'all children back altogether' but that can only happen if all social distancing measures and 'student bubbles' are suspended in schools and the not insignificant issues around how children are allowed to move around the community to and from the Academy are worked out. For us that means over 1500 students coming to school and leaving school within a short time frame. We are certainly planning for a full return but are also putting contingency plans into place in case of a staggered return with blended learning; a mixture of face-to-face teaching and online work at home with some year groups in one day and others in another. As soon as I can get some clarification from the DfE I will pass this on to you.

We are now turning our attention to Results Day for Year 13 and Year 11. I am acutely aware that we were unable to hold any form of leaving celebration and assembly. This week the Leavers Proms would have taken place, adding insult to injury, in fine weather! Therefore, we are planning two kinds of Results Days, one with and one without social distancing, for both year groups with an element of celebration so that the students get a chance to say goodbye to friends and staff and get a sense of closure before moving on to their next stage. More details to follow.

You will remember the Academy was inspected on 11 – 12 March earlier this year under section 5 of the schools inspection framework. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on schools, Ofsted paused the publication of inspection reports, they are now intending to publish all reports before the summer holidays in line with normal process. With this in mind, having waited for so long, I believe it is right that you receive a copy of the report as soon as possible and not wait for official publication. You can locate a [copy of the report](#) and my [accompanying letter](#) on our website within document downloads.

As we begin to emerge from the lockdown I hope the sense of community spirit that has carried us through the worst of the pandemic continues and that we all support our young people as they begin to re-engage with their normal school routines.

I would like to finish by thanking all our parents and carers for working with us and the many messages of support and thanks you have sent in, the most recent of which is (I have removed the student's name): *"I would also like to take this opportunity to pass on my thanks to all of [my daughter's] teachers during this tricky time. As a teacher myself, I know how hard it has been*

*organising home learning, dealing with technical issues and giving appropriate feedback. All of the work [my daughter] has been set has been excellent and the support she has received from your amazing staff has been exceptional. Please thank them for all of their hard work. I really believe [my daughter] has continued to make progress towards her GCSEs and it is all down to the commitment shown by the academy. Thank you."*

If you have any concerns or queries just get in touch.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Friday 19th June

Dear Parent/Carer

Summer officially begins tomorrow (20 June) and let's hope it brings with it some positive messages for education and how the government intend to give schools additional resources to help young people catch up on lost learning.

It has become clear over this week when talking with students in Year 12 and Year 10 that although they are keen to be back in the Academy actively learning with their peers in a classroom with a teacher and being able to socialise with their friends on a daily basis, they have appreciated everything their teachers have done to support them remotely. They have been particularly complimentary around the different approaches we have taken to learning and enjoy the 'live' lessons.

During the conversations with our Year 10 students over the last two days the emphasis has been on listening and gathering important information to shape what we offer over the remaining four weeks of this term. This information has allowed us to prioritise which students to have back in lessons from next week and those we can invite back later in the term.

## **YEAR 10 STUDENTS**

We have organised the last four weeks into two blocks of two weeks.

**Block 1: w/c 22 June & 29 June.** If your son/daughter has received a letter inviting them back into school from next week you will have the information you require (if you have any questions about your child coming back for lessons please just contact your child's Year Manager). If, at this stage, you have not received a letter your child should remain at home and they will continue to receive online lessons, with the continued rolling out of 'live' lessons.

**Block 2: w/c 6 July & 13 July.** If your child has remained at home during the above fortnight (block 1) they will be invited into school for the last two weeks of term for face-to-face teaching. A letter will be sent out during w/c 29 June so you have the information you need.

## **STUDENTS IN YEAR 7, 8 & 9**

Next week we have planned another Wellbeing and Challenge week where we hope to encourage students away from their devices and engage in more active and imaginative learning. Our aim is to keep students motivated in their learning as well as physically and mentally healthy. Resources and activities can be accessed in the usual way (front page of your child's VLE).

## **YEAR 8 STUDENTS**

During w/c 29 June work will not be set for subjects other than English, mathematics, science and PE. Instead, Monday to Thursday students will receive a 'live' introductory lesson at 1.00pm each day on their option subjects they have chosen to student in Year 9. Following each session a short project will be set for students to work their way through for the last two weeks of term. The intention is to provide an introduction to their option course and allow them to 'get ahead' ready for September. A letter explaining this further this will be sent out next week.

## **YEAR 12 STUDENTS**

All students will return next week attending lessons each morning, 10.00am – 12noon (students should not arrive before 9.50am). Students have the details.

Well, a lot to digest today. Apologies for the amount of information. As always, if you have any queries just get in touch.

So returning to my first sentence - my hope for the summer is that many of the social distancing restrictions recede so that we can get back to 'normal' as quickly as possible; enjoy some quality time with friends and family and get our young people learning again in their school building!

Have a good weekend.

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Tuesday 16th June

Dear Parent/Carer

It has been an absolute delight to be able to welcome back our Year 12 students this week. I stood at the main entrance this morning welcoming our young people back whilst taking their temperature – all passed I'm pleased to say! Although a little bemused at how the Academy now looks and having to sit 2 metres away from each other the conversations soon started and the smiles and laughed appeared.

We have put up a 'Reflections Tree' display in the atrium and will be inviting students to write a comment/feeling on a leaf to be added to a branch. Already we have had some interesting, inspiring and reassuring contributions: "Started learning sign language", "Had the chance to learn Dutch", "I found new routes to walk", "Independent study at uni seems less daunting", "I'm happy to be back to school and seeing my friends again".....Students are genuinely happy and relieved to be back talking with their teachers again. On Thursday and Friday we welcome back our Year 10 students for face-to-face conversations with staff.

Yesterday was our first Microsoft Teams 'live' interaction with our young people – a bit of a step into the unknown. Although there are some things we need to sort out going forward over half of our student cohort joined in a session. If you are online at home please do encourage your son/daughter to get involved.

To break the half term up, we are planning another Wellbeing and Challenge Week for Year 7 – 9 next week. As before we are encouraging students to leave their electronic devices and get active with their learning through a series of cross curricular activities. Information will be posted in the usual place.

As leaders we are beginning the process of scenario planning for what September may look like from being fully open for all students to being shut. My guess is it will be somewhere in the middle of these two scenarios. Whatever the new year looks like we will be ready for it!

On that optimistic note I wish you a good Tuesday and will write towards the end of the week.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Friday 12th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Someone I know in the teaching profession said the other day, "At the moment, the days seem longer and the weeks shorter"! I can certainly relate to this which is why at times my message to you goes out very late in the afternoon, so I'm keen today to right this wrong for today at least.

For the last three days, we have had all our staff back in school on a rota basis to receive training on how to operate safely in the building, training of Microsoft Teams and a presentation from me on expectations moving forward over the next few weeks. I must tell you this has gone very smoothly and staff are keen to welcome some of your children back next week for some face-to-face support. If your child is in Year 12 or Year 10 and you haven't received a letter and booklet please get in touch with your son/daughter's Year Manager.

You will know that over the course of this week we have been preparing students and teachers for the launch of our remote learning live lessons. We will begin this on Monday 15th June at 10am with a tutor group lesson. To assist you and your child access this at home, we have shared a number of resources. The TEAMS letter has links which takes you to short videos explaining how to set up Microsoft TEAMS at home. In addition to this, Mr Green has shared a video showing you how to access the lesson from a laptop or a tablet device. These are posted on our Facebook page, on our website and have also been emailed to your child. If you have any questions around this please just get in touch.

I want to finish today's message by asking for your support. We have noticed since May half term that there are students in each year who are not engaging with their learning. I can't stress enough how important it is to encourage your child to complete their work as set by their teachers each day. If they have problems they should email their teacher or phone their Year Manager. I appreciate that online learning / working independently is hard especially as time goes on but they should not give up. I would also add that encouraging your child to do some reading each day will help them enormously both in the short and long term.

***"If I've got a message to the younger generation, it's this: don't be scared of failure. Get out there, try things, and never be afraid to ask for help".*** Ant Middleton

Despite the weather, have a good weekend.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Tuesday 9th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

You'll be glad – no quotation this afternoon! Just some important updates.

Earlier this afternoon the Academies Trust Board met via Zoom to listen to and ask questions of our plans to partially reopen to more staff and students in Year 12 and Year 10. I'm delighted to report that they are satisfied that the documentation and the safety measures we have put in place provide assurance for them to allow us to reopen from tomorrow for staff training and from next

Monday to students. Directors were keen to ensure all risk assessments had been carried out, staff and students know what they need to do in the building, how we will interact with the students and what we plan to do with them as well as hearing an update on Centre Assessment Grades for Year 13 and Year 11. If you are a parent or carer of a Year 12 or Year 10 child you will be receiving a letter and an information booklet through the post very shortly. We will also upload the booklet on our website for everyone to see.

Picking up on another aspect I mentioned last week, we will be writing to all parents towards the end of the week around our plans to start using Microsoft TEAMS as a way to interact more personally with your son/daughter. The technology is reasonably straight forward but it will take a little time for us to learn the best ways of using it to be most effective, please bear with us.

As well as touching base with all our students we have been supporting a number of our more vulnerable students and their families who have found the last few months very difficult. Whilst many have coped with the challenges and pressures of lockdown some have not – we are mindful of this as we begin, very slowly, to welcome students back to school. If you know of anyone in our school community who needs support please do get in touch.

Following Friday's message some of you may feel today's message has been a bit like, 'tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you have told them' but I hope I have been able to provide a reassuring update and that we continue to move in the right direction.

As always, if you need us for any reason please just get in touch.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Friday 5th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Watching the news unfold this week (national and international) and businesses preparing to re-open, I have very much been reminded of a quote I heard a little while ago from the Greek philosopher Plato, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle".

For us it has been a week of preparation and finishing off: we have been sending off our Centre Assessment Grades for students in Year 13 and Year 11, been putting the final touches to site organisation, finalising staff training sessions, signing off the 'Information Booklet for Parents, Carers and Students', liaising with cleaning and catering teams and planning student sessions for w/c 15 June. My senior team and I have also been preparing essential paperwork to present to our Trust Board next Tuesday afternoon for them to authorise the re-opening of our Academy to a wider body of students in Year 12, Year 10 and vulnerable students in any year group.

Early next week we will be sending all parents and carers of students in Year 12 and Year 10 a letter explaining what we have planned for the first week back; essentially a series of subject tutorials for Year 12 and for Year 10 1:1 face to face (observing social distancing) sessions to find out how your sons and daughters have been getting on since 23rd March. From what they tell us we will be able to plan how we can best support them for the rest of the term. As well as the letter you will receive a hard copy of our 'Information Booklet for Parents and Students' which, as I said at the beginning of the week, sets out the different areas for consideration and how we intend to deal with them for example, procedures for accessing and exiting the building, how to maintain the 2m social distancing rule, movement around the Academy, classroom protocols, arrangements for breaks and lunch, what happens if a child exhibits Covid 19 symptoms,

behaviour expectations and more. A copy of the booklet will be posted on our website with a text link for all parents, carers and students to view.

In the next week or so we will be introducing a new teaching initiative for all students which we hope will enhance your child's learning experience. As we progress through the term we would like to further engage our students in their learning through a more personalised approach using Microsoft TEAMS. Teachers will be inviting your child to join a lesson at various times in the week. This will provide more support, instruction and interaction between them and their teacher. More information to follow.

As the summer season emerges we can begin to embrace and accept a new normal and look forward to some sporting fixtures opening up such as football and F1.

I wish you a safe weekend with your families.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June

Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome back to a summer term like no other. I hope you and your family managed to enjoy some quality time together last week – in the sun!

As you will now be aware, the government have said that secondary schools can welcome back Year 12 and Year 10 students from the Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June for some face to face support; we are very much planning for this date. I appreciate all of you who took the time to complete our Parents/Carers survey just before half term. This information will be integral in helping us plan our approach from the 15<sup>th</sup>. I was in a lengthy meeting this morning with senior colleagues and staff representatives talking through our risk assessment document and presenting our plans for reopening: first to staff, then students. You will appreciate much of the discussion and robust challenge was around how we can reasonably assure the health and safety of our staff and students. Following this meeting we will now move forward on more detailed plans around staff training and organising for students being back in the building. As I have stated previously, this 'face to face support' must offer a meaningful opportunity for students to re-engage with teachers and support staff in person.

Understandably, you will want reassurances on how we will manage the safety of your child whilst attending the academy. Therefore, we are producing an 'Information Booklet for Parents and Students' which sets out the different areas for consideration and how we intend to deal with them for example, procedures for accessing and exiting the building, how to maintain the 2m social distancing rule, movement around the academy, classroom protocols, arrangements for breaks and lunch, what happens if a child exhibits Covid 19 symptoms, behaviour expectations and more. When the booklet is ready we will get it to you.

As soon as I can provide more details of exact times and what the Year 12 and Year 10 students will be doing in school I'll be in touch.

Do visit us on Facebook to see some of the excellent work our fantastically gifted and creative students produced during our Wellbeing and Challenge Week before half term.

Whilst we begin to enjoy some of the lockdown easing measures do please continue to stay safe.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Friday 22nd May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

This week has probably one of the busiest and most challenging in my own and my senior leaders' careers; collating risk assessments, planning the site for social distancing (including catering and cleaning strategy), liaising with teaching unions, working with the local authority (transport), reading the continuous and changing guidance from the government, keeping our staff informed and attending virtual meetings! (More about this below).

#### Wellbeing and challenge week

However.....the one thing that has kept me sane and positive is the fantastically creative, imaginative and skilful work your sons and daughters have been producing this week. The student's engagement this week is extremely high – as we hoped. But the main aim is to get them off and away from their electronic devices. I hope they are getting out into the sun and getting plenty of vitamin D! We will be showcasing a selection of students' work over the next few weeks.

#### Half term

We have asked all our parents who normally access our child care facility in school whether they will be sending their son/daughter in over the May half term (25 – 29 May). At this moment in time no parent/carers requires this facility, therefore **we plan to close the Academy for the full week of half term.**

#### After half term

We will be open from the 1 June for vulnerable children and children of key workers. **At this moment in time we will not be able to welcome back any other children in Year 12 and Year 10 week commencing 1 June.** I hasten to add, along with my senior leaders and the Trust, we have not taken this decision lightly. I am sure I speak on behalf of everyone who works in education when I say we all want to return to our schools and get our students actively learning again with each other. We all know why this ambition is so important on a number of different levels. However, we must plan this carefully and diligently taking account and mitigating potential risks as we have highlighted in our Risk Assessment document. **Our core consideration is the safety and wellbeing of colleagues, students and visitors.**

Along with me, if your child is in Year 12 and Year 10, I am sure you are disappointed that your they cannot return to school sooner but taking into account the guidance from the government for schools (due 28 May) to offer some 'face to face' learning for Year 12 and Year 10 students we are working hard to find a solution that provides effective and valuable 'face to face' learning but at the same time minimising physical movement particularly in large groups, both in the academy and outside, ie. year groups travelling to and from school at the same time.

To help us in our planning we will be sending a link for an online survey to our Year 12 & 10 parents. We would be grateful if this could be completed and submitted no later than noon Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May.

Please be assured, as soon as we can safely welcome back your child we will.

In the meantime, I hope you and your family manage to get some time to relax next week.

Keep yourselves safe.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Friday 15th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

"May you live in interesting times". There is much debate and speculation over exactly where this saying comes from. What we do know is that 'we' are indeed living in interesting and very challenging times. Indeed, currently, things are changing daily.

I know you will all want more information around whether our students in Year 12 and Year 10 are able to come back to school from 1 June. Unfortunately, at this time, we just can't say. As well as waiting for further guidance from the government (the first of which is due early next week), we are in the process of completing the first draft of a Risk Assessment. Until we can satisfy ourselves that we can safely open to our Year 12 and Year 10 students – keeping them and our staff safe - we won't be in a position to provide the reassurance you need.

You know I have written on several occasions about how impressed I've been with how students have engaged with their work. Now, several months on, I'm very conscious that some students are beginning to struggle with the solitude and monotony of home learning. I know only too well from my own children. Therefore, next week we are taking a break from our usual 'timetabled' lesson format and having a '**Wellbeing and Challenge Week**'. From Monday 18 May to Friday 22 May departments will be setting activities and projects in three groups: Year 7 & 8, Year 9 & 10 and Year 12. Students will be able to choose an activity or project from several for each department. Students will be able to access the work through the VLE in the usual way. We would like to promote challenge, creativity, time for reflection and a chance to learn in a different way. During the week your child's Progress Tutor will contact your son/daughter to see how they are getting on. If you have any questions around this please get in touch in the usual way. Mr Ward has made a virtual assembly to introduce the week – this will be available from Monday morning. A 'trailer' will be available to view later this afternoon.

We are already thinking about how things will look after half term and want to offer more personalised lessons with your child's teacher. There is a training implication but we will endeavour to give this new approach a go in June.

You may be wondering what teachers get up to during the working day whilst schools are closed? Here is the account of one teacher at the Academy:

#### A Day in the Life of a teacher during Lockdown

*"It's often challenging trying to balance the needs of my own child with the needs of the children that would ordinarily be in my care; children that I genuinely want the best for.*

*A significant proportion of my time during working hours is spent communicating with students via email; enquiring about their wellbeing, particularly if I can see that they have been unable to access their learning via the VLE. I appreciate that each student's set of circumstances is different and I am mindful of this when contacting them.*

*As a teacher of a core subject, I am responsible for the learning of in excess a 150 children, so monitoring their progress remotely can be challenging at times. I have been humbled by the volume of emails that I've received from students, expressing their gratitude for the support being offered to them; I do monitor my emails throughout the day to ensure that I'm on hand to answer any queries and offer assistance as and when my students require it.*

*When my own child has gone to bed I prepare materials for my classes and provide some form of feedback to students that have submitted work to me over the course of the day. I tend to upload the following day's lessons to the VLE the night before to enable students to access their learning at their earliest convenience.*

*At least once a week we have a virtual team meeting where we get a chance to catch up and swap ideas. Already we are beginning to look at our curriculum and schemes of work for next half term and September 2020. So, some of my time is spent on medium term plans.*

*I love my job and look forward to the day when it is safe to return to work, to see my students in the classroom once again."*

As always, if you need us for any reason please just get in touch.

Keep yourselves safe.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Tuesday 12th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As expected we now have further guidance from the government. This includes details of the nationwide plans to reopen schools.

Currently, we remain closed to all students except the most vulnerable and the children of key workers. In terms of a return to school, we are working on plans and will be ready to accept students when directed but I would like to reiterate the safety of all our students and staff is paramount and forms the central part of our planning. The early indications are that Year 10 and Year 12 will be the first to return in some form in June. This is entirely open to change at this stage and is wholly dependent on the government being confident they are satisfying their 5 key objectives. We will share more details as the picture becomes clearer.

I would encourage you to read the following document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Monday 11th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am sure you will have heard the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday evening about schools. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say I was hoping for some more clarity around the specifics of school's reopening; the DfE have indicated that details may follow later today. However, we do know that primary schools in England may be ready to reopen 'in stages' – but not until 1 June at the earliest. This could begin with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils going back. The Prime Minister also said it's the government's 'ambition' to give secondary school pupils taking examinations next year 'at least some time with their teachers' before the summer holidays.

(When this happens, we will ensure we'll be ready to welcome our students back). Childcare settings will also be asked to prepare to open to more children from 1 June. When I receive any updates, I'll get in touch.

Can I respectfully remind you that, at the time of writing this, the existing message prevails, schools are closed and are only open to our most vulnerable students and the children of key workers for child care.

With further weeks of virtual school ahead of us we feel it is appropriate to spend **a week focussing on our young people's wellbeing** and step away from the 'timetabled' lesson format. From Monday 18 May to Friday 22 May departments will be setting activities and projects in three groups: Year 7 & 8, Year 9 & 10 and Year 12. Students will be able to choose an activity or project from several for each department. Student will be able to access the work through the VLE in the usual way. We would like to promote challenge, creativity, time for reflection and a chance to learn in a different way. We are also planning a virtual assembly to introduce the week.

Lately the weather has be a little more unsettled with short, sharp showers having the potential to keep us inside or get us very wet! However, in between the showers, I would encourage your sons and daughters to get outside and do some exercise (perhaps try a keep fit session in groups via Facetime, Zoom, Skype or any other 'platform' that they have). As we know, exercise is really important not just in terms of our physical health but for our mental wellbeing too.

Get in touch if you need us. We may be closed due to the pandemic, but Virtual Consett is open and we continue to care for all our young people.

Best wishes for the week ahead

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Wednesday 6th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I've just started reading the book, 'A Curriculum of Hope' by Debra Kidd. It presents ideas around a new approach to curriculum design, one which empowers schools to build bridges between students learning and the world around them.

The book begins with:

*"Hope is the thing with feathers –*

*That perches in the soul –*

*And sings the tune without words –*

*And never stops – at all –"*

By Emily Dickinson

Given the current situation I found the words quite poignant.

I am sure I speak for all of us when I say we are eagerly awaiting Boris Johnson's statement due on Sunday where he is expected to set out a detailed road map for the lifting of restrictions. Whatever the nature of the statement is, I can tell you that my senior teams and I have already started having wide ranging conversations and making plans around how we might

re-open the Academy in the future to certain year groups. Please be reassured when we are told we can re-open (whenever that is) we will be ready to go!

In the meantime, I would encourage you to [share this flier](#) with your son/daughter – it pretty much speaks for itself. There is lots to write about at the moment!

The government have recently published a Department for Education coronavirus helpline:

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm – Monday to Friday & 10am to 4pm – Saturday and Sunday

As always, if you need us for any reason please just get in touch.

Keep yourselves safe.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Friday 1st May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

The poet TS Eliot once wrote that "April is the cruellest month". I suspect it has also been the strangest and most challenging one any of us has experienced. However, let's hope, as the Prime Minister suggested yesterday, that next week brings some positive messages around how we are all going to start to emerge from the lockdown and begin the next chapter in the CoVID 19 crisis.

I have read a lot recently in newspapers and journals around how disruptive to our children's education this period of school closure is to their progress. As we know, it doesn't matter how good the online resources are or how motivated our students are, there is absolutely no substitute for social contact: teacher and child, child and child. We all learn from one another.

Although I have frequently reported how impressed I have been with how our young people have engaged with their learning, there is starting to emerge a difference in the way students are completing the work. I know for some of our young people times are hard for all sorts of reasons but there are some who are choosing to do very little. To this end could I ask you as parents/carers to spend a few minutes each day asking them about their work: what subjects have they had, what have they found hard/easy, what activities do they enjoy most? Do they need help on anything? Please do encourage them to contact their teacher if they need help. Also, please do encourage your son/daughter to read 'something' each day, if only for 10 minutes. This adult contact around their work will help. Could I also remind you that all parents/carers have log ins to access the VLE to see what your child(ren) are doing/done. If you have forgotten your log in details please do get in touch via [Studenthelpdesk@consettacademy.org.uk](mailto:Studenthelpdesk@consettacademy.org.uk).

At the end of next week, we have our next Bank Holiday – Friday 8 May to celebrate VE Day. We have asked all our parents who normally access our child care facility in school whether they will be sending their son/daughter in on the 8 May. At this moment in time no parent/carer requires this facility, therefore we plan to close next Friday but will be open again from Monday 11 May.

I wish you a safe weekend – fingers crossed for the weather!

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Wednesday 29th April 2020

Dear Parent/Carers

As I sit and write this message the first rain shower in weeks falls on my garden (no, I won't say it!). In these strange times at least some things don't change as we begin to welcome in the month of May.

Each day I receive updates on the number of students who have logged in to the VLE. Now, in our fourth week of working remotely, not counting the two week Easter break, I'm delighted to report that almost 8 out of 10 students regularly access work. And of course this doesn't include a number of students who are completing work as hard copies. This is hugely encouraging, given the circumstances, that many of our young people are showing great commitment, courage and maturity. I'd also like to thank you, their parents and carers for all you are doing to support your children in these challenging times and, of course, our fantastic staff. Parents and carers wishing to request hard copies of work should email their child's Year Manager and we endeavour to post these out as quickly as possible.

Many of our students are submitting some fantastic work during the current lockdown and many examples are shared as Golden Moments on our Facebook page and website twice daily. It would be great if you could encourage your child to continue submitting photographs of their work to staff and hopefully they may also be awarded a Golden Moment nomination.

We're also trying to introduce some more 'fun' activities along the line too. Mr Boarder has kindly offered to organise 'The Great Consett Academy Bake Off'. In the current climate, we've noticed the massive increase in people giving baking a go – whether they are experienced or completely new! So, with this in mind, we thought we could have some fun between staff and students with The Great Consett Academy Bake Off! All you need to do is to bake anything you want. It doesn't have to be fancy and can simply be cornflake cakes if you want to use your leftover Easter Eggs. Once your bake is completed email a photo with a description of what you've made to [jboarder@consettacademy.org.uk](mailto:jboarder@consettacademy.org.uk) You have until the **4th of May** for your creations! We will share all entries on Facebook and see if we have a future Paul Hollywood or Prue Leith within our community. Best of luck. Ready, Set, BAKE!

Unfortunately, I have no further updates on when, or if, schools will open after the current 3-week lockdown block. I can assure you we will continue to set work, give as much feedback as possible, keep in touch with our young people and keep the school building open for the children of key workers who are critical to our country and community.

Year 13 and Year 11 teachers and their respective Heads of Department are continuing to work through the compilation of Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) for students. We are using evidence from a number of sources to ensure a fair and accurate representation. These grades are subject to a number of internal quality assurance checks so you and your son/daughter can be assured that the grade they are given is as fair and accurate as possible. To understand the CAGs please follow this

link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXuDOtJY1Q&feature=youtu.be>

We expect results' days to be as follows (more details will follow):

13<sup>th</sup> August 2020            AS/A Level results day

20<sup>th</sup> August 2020            GCSE results day

Finally, remember to keep yourself and your son/daughter safe – I have attached a [link to a document sent](#) out today from Durham Educational Psychology Service on 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'; it's a useful read.

If you have any questions or concerns just get in touch.

Take care.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

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Wednesday 23rd April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

As we all come to terms with another 3 weeks in lockdown, I can tell you that many teacher unions and respected education leaders are lobbying government ministers to provide more detail on when schools might potentially re-open, even if to a limited few. This may provide reassurance and lessen anxiety among parents and our young people. It will also help us to plan a coherent and less stressful start to school life again.

In the meantime some key pieces of information:

### **Risk of fraud**

We have been informed from the Education and Skills Funding Agency of increased risk of fraud during the coronavirus pandemic. Fraudsters are currently actively exploiting these difficult times and are targeting companies and members of the public for financial gain. The ESFA have been informed that some learners and parents have received a fraudulent letter which appears to be from the Education and Skills Funding Agency asking for personal learner bank details in relation to the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. The Education and Skills Funding Agency have confirmed that they will never ask for personal bank account details. My finance team may call very occasionally to confirm bank details should a refund be due. However this call should be planned and they will only confirm bank account details but never request them. The overriding message is please can I remind you to be extra vigilant.

### **Online support**

To support student learning across all year groups we issued a large number of IT devices to households that did not have access before the school shutdown to enable access to our VLE. Unfortunately, we were unable to support households that did not have access to the internet. Recently the government has announced a scheme to support disadvantaged Year 10 students with devices and internet access. We are currently reviewing our audit of student access to see if we meet the criteria to apply for some of our students. If you feel as though you would qualify then please contact us on [enquiries@consettaacademy.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@consettaacademy.org.uk).

### **Year 11 students**

In order to aid Year 11 students' transition into the next stage of their education, staff have created activities and collated resources to use over the upcoming months. This includes resources for A' level study and also vocational subjects. These can be found on the top of the VLE homepage, labelled 'Post 16 bridging'. We encourage students to have a go at the activities and access the resources of their chosen subjects. If they experience any problems they should contact Miss Jobling.

Please note that we are still accepting additional applications to Consett Academy Sixth Form.

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

I realise that this current situation is very different to the school day that your child(ren) are used to. However, for their mental health and wellbeing, it is a good idea to create their own routine for the new school days. As I have mentioned before the Easter holiday, they need to make sure they have a balance of tasks, school work and other activities, with time away from screens and in the fresh air. Mrs Moncur has shared the following schedule with her Year 8s who have been finding it useful to bring structure to their days.

## COVID-19 DAILY SCHEDULE

© Jessica McHale Photography

Before 9:00am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJs in laundry
9:00-10:00	Morning walk	Family walk with the dog, walk PJs to laundry
10:00-11:00	Academic time	NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal
11:00-12:00	Creative time	Lego, magazines, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc.
12:00	Lunch	
12:30PM	Chore time	A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and baseboard C - wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets
1:00-2:30	Quiet time	Reading, puzzles, etc.
2:30-4:00	Academic time	ELECTRONICS OK Real games, Prodigy, Educational show
4:00-5:00	Afternoon fresh air	Bikes, walk the dog, play outside
5:00-6:00	Dinner	
6:00-8:00	Free TV time	Kid showers etc
8:00	Bedtime	All kids
9:00PM	Bedtime	All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight

### Top Tips:

- Have a routine to your school days.
- Plan in time to get some fresh air.
- Plan time to read for pleasure.
- Have a regular time for meals.
- Plan free-time towards the end of the day to do something you enjoy.
- Plan time to do something to help in the house.
- Don't spend all day in front of a screen.

Keep safe and well.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal

Monday 20th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to our very first remote summer term!

I hope you all had a restful and safe Easter break. Whilst we still find ourselves navigating a very different way of life, being able to enjoy fine, sunny weather helps.

We've all had to adapt to new ways of working, so I wanted to take the chance to say what an amazing job you're doing supporting your child's wellbeing and learning during this time.

It's definitely been a strange and challenging time, so it's understandable if you and your child feel anxious and frustrated at the moment. We're here for you every step of the way as we figure this all out together.

Remember, if you have any concerns about helping your child learn or you need any other support from the school, please let us know. If your child has any issues at all, they should contact their Year Manager so we can help.

We miss having the students in school, but we must continue to follow the government's guidance to keep everyone in our community safe. So, we remain closed to all students apart from children of key workers who are critical to keeping our community and country safe and working.

Our teachers will be setting plenty of tasks for students to get stuck into over the summer term. Do remind your child to take breaks away from screens as well, and also make time for having fun and connecting with friends and family.

While we can't say yet when we'll be able to open the school fully, rest assured that we'll continue doing our utmost to keep students learning and the school connected.

Following the Gavin Williamson's Downing Street briefing at the weekend, there is speculation around Year 10 and Year 12 being allowed back to school next month. I have not received any further information but if I have any subsequent updates I will share them with you.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Wednesday 8th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this message finds you and your family in good health. We are certainly being blessed with some sunny (and warm!) weather during our staycation!

I wrote last week saying that we would stay open every day over the two-week Easter break. So far this week, we have not had any students attend the academy for child care. So, in order to maximise the government's advice of 'stay at home unless you have to go out' we have made the decision to shut the Academy on Good Friday (10 April) and Bank Holiday Monday (13 April). At this time we plan to remain open for the children of key workers and for vulnerable students Thursday 9 April and Tuesday (14 April) to Friday (17 April).

Fingers crossed that schools can open quickly after the Easter break and we can work to get back to normal routines.

Best wishes

Kevin Reynolds - Executive Principal

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Friday 3rd April 2020

A look into the future for this Spring bunny!



We hope you have an enjoyable break even though this will be an Easter with a difference! This is an opportunity to move away from the 'learning from home' routine and do something different. Be inventive, creative, be active and be sociable in the ways we have learned how to be! School will be open for children of key workers, but there will be no catering facilities. If you intend on using this facility, please inform the relevant Year Manager so we can accommodate and staff a rota.

Teachers have designed some holiday challenges with a difference which can be accessed via the following link. <https://consettacademy.org.uk/easterchallenges>

We would like students to choose a challenge which interests them the most, have a go and submit it to the relevant teacher. Prizes for the top 3 challenges in each subject will receive a prize after the Easter break. Following the break, teachers will return to setting daily work and the expectation is for students to do the same.

A look back at the past for our Year 11 and Year 13 students.



We will get there with you in the near future!



We will update Year 11 and Year 13 students in more detail after the break with guidance on results and then look forward to celebrating their achievements in the coming months.

I leave you with a quote from A.A Milne "***Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there some day.***" – ***Winnie-the-Pooh***

**Kate Jackson - Assistant Director**

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Thursday 2nd April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

This beautiful weather is making it a surreal time – knowing that there's a major health crisis intensifying around us, and yet the air never having felt fresher, nor the streets quieter. Yesterday saw the first significant dip in the numbers of our students logging on to the VLE. I appreciate it has been hard going over the last couple of weeks with our young people having to work in a very mature way. I think as adults it hasn't been at all easy, so we must spare a thought for and support our children. That said, only one day left to go before the 'official' end of the Spring Term!

This brings me nicely onto the Easter Holiday. First and foremost, students should take the opportunity to relax and get away from school work. I would also add away from electronic devices and computer screens too! They should give their eyes and brains a rest. We are planning to put together some 'holiday activities' should your son / daughter want to access them – fun stuff! I hasten to add these activities are purely optional. You can access them here from next week: <https://consettacademy.org.uk/easterchallenges>

After some thought and discussion, we have decided to open every day of the Easter fortnight (including Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday) to offer child care for key workers who are critical to the national effort during the COVID 19 crisis. Please note that there will be no catering facilities on site so children will have to bring a packed lunch with a water bottle (which can be filled at our water dispensers as usual). We will not be able to provide any additional activities during the day only those as indicated above.

I will write again, if there are any significant updates. Mrs Jackson will be writing tomorrow's message – if there are any updates affecting Yr13 and Yr11, she'll let you know.

In some ways it doesn't seem appropriate to wish you all a Happy Easter, as I would normally do, but I hope you manage to get some rest with your families and enjoy the weather.

As always, stay safe and look after each other.

Kevin Reynolds

Executive Principal

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Wednesday 1st April

Dear Parents/Carers

As we are half way through our second week working from home, I continue to be amazed by the resilience of our young people and those they live with. Together we are working to make sure that we keep our communities safe as well as studying a variety of subjects through the access to the online resources. In an age where children have grown up being used to technology and its uses, can I remind all parents and carers to keep your children safe online and ensure that you are checking the sites they are accessing? I have included a couple of useful sites below which offers help to parents and carers.

We continue to try to keep you as informed as possible regarding any updates from the government. Therefore with effect from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 families of students eligible for benefit related free school meals will access that national voucher scheme. More information will be sent to those whom this applies.

As we move towards the Spring break we are working to continue in school to be able to provide support to our Key Workers children by enabling them to attend the Academy. For all other

students, we are hoping to offer some project based opportunities for them to help to occupy their time over the two weeks. This will be voluntary and accessed via our VLE. It is another way that our staff are working to support everyone in these unprecedented times. What we would urge is that the students take time away from their studies and try something new or learn a new skill. More information will be sent out about these opportunities later in the week.

For now, I hope that you all remain safe and well and as always, please get in touch if there is anything we can do to help.

Rachel Somerville

Director of School & Curriculum

<https://parentinfo.org/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

[https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIktuA5LWK2wIVRYXVCh2afg2aEAAYASAAEgIJ5vD\\_BwE](https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIktuA5LWK2wIVRYXVCh2afg2aEAAYASAAEgIJ5vD_BwE)

- [Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

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Tuesday 31st March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I'm delighted to report that the vast majority of students are either still logging in and working on line or working through workbooks. Lots of ingenious methods are being used by our students to complete their work and by teachers giving feedback. If you haven't had a look please go to our website image gallery [bit.ly/2QL63tF](http://bit.ly/2QL63tF) or [www.facebook.com/ConsettAcademy/](http://www.facebook.com/ConsettAcademy/). Keep it, folks!

Today the government launched the national voucher scheme for children eligible for free school meals. We are working through the practicalities of delivering this to those of you who are eligible and will provide information shortly.

I wrote yesterday that we are expecting a steer from the government this week on how grades for Yr13 and Yr11 will be awarded this year. Some concern has been expressed at the possible impact on student progression to higher level courses. Although the national response to this is still awaited, the Academy Trust has confirmed that students wishing to progress to the Sixth Form at Consett Academy will be able to do so if they have the support of their teachers that it is the right destination for them and that their predicted grades confirm they would have met the entry conditions. New College Durham has confirmed that the same approach will be applied to students wishing to attend the College. We will encourage other institutions to which our students plan to progress to adopt the same approach. Our intention is to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the current situation.

Best wishes.

Kevin Reynolds  
Executive Principal

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Monday 30th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Last week has surely been one of the most difficult weeks of our working lives. Regardless of what we normally do, the week brought significant challenges. For what we are all living through now, there is no tried and tested roadmap. We are all having to dig deep and negotiate the twists and turns day by day. I have watched with interest just how many young people are adapting to their new working lives – many quickly and creatively showing huge resilience. Lots of our students are developing their own support networks and timetables within timetables at home. I have thoroughly enjoyed looking at all their Golden Moments – keep them coming in!

In terms of how the government will award grades for Yr13 and Yr11 this year, I am advised that guidance will come from Ofqual around mid-week. I do know that at the heart of the awarded grade will likely be evidenced, ethical teacher assessment. This is an anxious time for students in these years, so as soon as I get any information I will get it straight out to you.

Please do keep encouraging your son/daughter to access the learning resources – we are working hard to respond to all questions and concerns.

Remember, regular breaks and fresh air are really important too!

Stay safe and best wishes.

Kevin Reynolds

Executive Principal

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Friday 27th March

Dear Parents/Carers

We reach the end of our first week of 'home learning' so could I take this opportunity to commend all of our students for their motivation, dedication and independence in this time of uncertainty and change. Teachers have been supporting students as best they can and have enjoyed receiving completed work as the week has progressed. As parents/carers we have also had to adapt to life at home and have equally overcome some barriers and are hopefully feeling like a routine is falling into place.

If you require hard copies of work moving forward, please contact your child's teacher and we can arrange to have work ready for collection at our main reception. Next week will mirror this week and work will be set in the usual way on our VLE. Golden Moments will feature on our website, Joe Wicks in the morning will be a daily event in most homes and we will work towards our Spring Break with the rounding up of work by Friday. More information will follow next week regarding the 2 week Easter Break.

DfE have informed us that plans for Year 11 and year 13 GCSE and A-Level results will be shared before Easter, so once we have information on this we will share it with you. In the meantime, please continue to communicate with us, share your successes and frustrations and we will work together to ensure the future is bright.

I will leave you with the ever relevant words of William Wordsworth:

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.



Kate Jackson - Director of Outcomes and Teaching

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Thursday 26th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Wednesday was our first day of sharing Golden Moments with you all. If you haven't had a look please go to our website image gallery [bit.ly/2QL63tF](https://bit.ly/2QL63tF) or [www.facebook.com/ConsettAcademy/](https://www.facebook.com/ConsettAcademy/) there are some wonderfully creative and detailed pieces of work. Remember, if you have something to share with us please email/text individual subject teachers or Year Managers.

Our VLE monitoring tool seemed to suggest that fewer students logged in on Wednesday but we feel this might not be an accurate picture. A number of parents we have contacted today have said that their son/daughter did access work on line yesterday - so apologies for the intrusion, we will endeavour to sort the issue out with our system.

As of lunchtime today, I have received no further updates from the DfE.

We will begin to work on plans for the Easter holiday shortly but are waiting on clearer guidance from the government.

Thank for your support and patience as we work our way through some technical hitches.

Kevin Reynolds

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Wednesday 25th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Yesterday was another busy day for our students as they settled into their second day of working from home. Our staff have been impressed with how well they have tackled the tasks and how much effort some are putting into their work. Where we can, we are giving positive comments and are trying to showcase outstanding pieces of work on a regular basis. As students are sharing their work with us staff are rewarding students and looking for examples to reward 'Golden Moments'. As parents, please feel free to also share your 'Golden Moments' of your child(ren) working from home so we can share on our Facebook site. These can be shared by emailing or texting individual subject teachers or Year Managers.

As I said yesterday, students should take regular breaks (with exercise) away from their devices to ensure they don't experience fatigue or headaches.

As and when I receive any updates from the DfE or examination boards I will share it with you.

In the meantime, take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Kevin Reynolds