

Dear pupils, parents and carers

Welcome back to NBHS, and to our summer term. I love the beginning of each new term, and this one is no different in that respect. However, it felt very strange starting the first day by switching on my laptop in my study at home, rather than standing at the front door of the school, greeting pupils with a “good morning” and a smile. I know this summer term is going to be unlike any other.

I hope that you and your family managed to have a pleasant and relaxing break over the Easter period, despite the very unusual and challenging situation in which we find ourselves. Sadly, some of our staff and pupils have faced difficult circumstances; please be assured that, although we are not together in the school building, we are still here to support our young people. If there is anything that you would like to share with us, you can contact us on communications@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk, or by emailing individual guidance teachers. Yesterday, we sent parents and carers information on supports available for children and families; I hope you find that document helpful.

Also shared yesterday with parents and carers of senior pupils was Monday’s statement from the SQA. In addition to this, schools have received further guidance from the SQA on approaches to finalising pupils’ estimate grades by 29 May. We are now considering that guidance, both at authority level and across subject teams in school. We will continue to keep you updated on this. Apart from tasks planned before the Easter holiday, senior pupils will not be asked to complete any further assessments for this year’s National Qualification classes. The work will continue for S4 and S5 pupils, though, as teachers will continue to engage with their classes: suggested tasks will focus on preparation for new courses and next steps in learning, such as background reading, watching relevant videos, using Scholar or Bitesize, or consolidating skills. We expect our senior pupils to remain proactive in their learning.

Before the school closure, we had planned to start our new timetable on 1 June. Along with secondary schools in East Lothian and nationally, we are now looking at bringing forward the move up to new year groups, possibly to mid-May. While pupils will not be able to move into physical classrooms at that time, they will move into new Google classrooms to begin working on their new courses. We will update you on that soon. In the meantime, teachers will continue to provide work for pupils in their current classes as they did before the Easter break. In this Friday’s weekly update, you will get an outline of home learning activities being covered in all subjects, for all year groups. The survey on home learning issued by the guidance team before the Easter break has given us some valuable information on how pupils in S1, S2 and S3 are finding the experience of learning at home. The results are being shared with all teaching staff and will help to shape how we deliver home learning experiences in the weeks ahead.

Thinking of the new timetable, it takes a great deal of work on the part of many staff to get it up and running each year. With all pupils in year groups S2 to S5 making choices, the timetable is very complex and we are always very proud that a large majority of our pupils get their first choices. You will understand, however, that there will always be a small number of pupils whose particular combination of subject choices cannot be accommodated, and some classes which are over-subscribed. Senior staff are currently contacting these pupils to discuss their options. It is, of course, difficult to finalise the fine detail of individual course choices without the possibility of face-to-face conversations with pupils but we will do our best to ensure a satisfactory outcome for all.

We very much look forward to working with you over the coming weeks and months and I wish you and your family well in these challenging times.

Lauren Rodger, Head Teacher
22 April 2020