

Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Covid-19 (Coronavirus)- School Update**

Firstly, I sincerely hope that this letter finds you and your families safe and well. I wanted to welcome you back to the start of a somewhat different summer term and to take the opportunity to update you on a range of actions that the school is taking in trying to support our whole community through this unprecedented and challenging period.

### **Distance Learning**

We recognise that trying to support students to learn remotely is a challenge for everyone. We know that your primary focus will be to keep your children at home, safe and well. Our role is to do everything we can to support parents and carers in being able to enable learning to continue at home wherever possible. We know that this will be vastly different from what we can do in schools and so our expectations are different to what we would usually expect of students. Over the past two weeks, we have been developing a more manageable approach to **distance learning** that ensures that we are able to strike the right balance between prioritising the safety and wellbeing of households whilst keeping a routine that assists learning and maintains a healthy mind and body.

From Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, we will be operating a different timetable. Students will be asked to study and work on **two subjects a day** alongside an activity to support physical health (as set by our PE team) and a reading activity to support our drive to improve standards of literacy for all our students. There is overwhelming evidence that keeping a structure and routine at home, as far as is manageable, makes a considerable difference to the wellbeing of children.

As a **minimum**, students will be asked to complete the following:

- Years 7 and 8: 1 -2 hours of work daily
- Years 9, 10 and 11: 2-3 hours of work daily

During school days students will be set work through Class Charts and will be given specific tasks that they must complete once a week. Some of the completion of tasks may be through online platforms such as Seneca, MyMaths, Tassomai that gives the student instant feedback. Many of the parents/carers who completed our online survey shared that these types of platforms are valued.

There will also be suggestions on how students can complete tasks and activities without the need to use a computer and these methods are equally valid. Some work will be topic based and allow students to work on project-based tasks whereas some subjects will give short instruction and clear guidance as to the work students should produce. What is important is that students remain engaged with learning, have a go at all activities and try their best to keep learning.

Most of the learning activities will be linked to learning that students have already experienced in the classroom throughout their studies. Teachers will take the opportunity to revisit topics and ensure key concepts, knowledge and

skills are embedded. We hope that this helps to alleviate anxieties that some children will have about learning new information without the direct teaching of their usual class teacher.

We have put together a **parent and carer guide** which explains how **distance learning** will operate in more detail which can be found on the school website ([www.poltairschool.co.uk](http://www.poltairschool.co.uk)). Please do refer to this for more detail as to how distance learning will work.

### **Year 11**

Mrs Kellow shared Ofqual's letter to parents and carers during the Easter holidays to inform them about how grades will be calculated for Year 11 students (this can be found on the school website). Teachers of Year 11 students will be using a range of different sources to determine the teacher assessment such as classwork and homework; results in assignments and any mock exams; any non-exam assessment or coursework that might have done; and the general progress during the course. All teacher assessment grades will be moderated by exam boards and so we will not be able to share grades with students until the official exam results day. Ofqual are hoping that this will be slightly earlier than the planned date in August. Once we know the specific details of this, we will share them with you.

In the meantime, Year 11 will still be provided with work that supports them in being ready to progress to the next stage of their education whether this is a course at college or an apprenticeship. Ofqual have also said that students will be given the option to sit an exam in their subjects in the future should they wish to and so all subjects will continue to provide work that ensures that students are not disadvantaged from being able to take an exam in the future if they wish to.

### **Safeguarding**

Our safeguarding team are continuing to make regular contact with families who have been receiving direct support from the school prior to the school closure. If you have any safeguarding concerns during this time or require advice from our safeguarding team, please refer to the school website for contact details under the 'Safeguarding' heading on the front page of the website.

Also, on the school website, you can find a range of materials for supporting mental health during this period of isolation which you may find beneficial.

### **Free School Meals**

We have worked with Chartwells, our school caterers, to ensure that all our families who are in receipt of free school meals receives either a food care package or voucher to purchase food for lunches. Food care packages were successfully sent out this week. Unfortunately, there have been delays at a national level in the vouchers being released. We are working daily to resolve this and hope that these will be with those who requested them by the start of next week.

During this time, we recognise that some families will be struggling financially. If your financial circumstances have changed and you think that you might now be eligible for free school meals, please use the link below to complete an application form.

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/school-meals/application-for-free-school-meals-and-pupil-premium/>

I would urge you to read the eligibility criteria before you apply. If your application is successful, the school will be notified, and we will contact you regarding how best to give you access to support during this time.

We are committed to supporting our families as much as possible so if you are experiencing significant hardship and you think we may be able to help, please contact the appropriate member of our safeguarding team. Their details can be found on the school website [www.poltairschool.co.uk](http://www.poltairschool.co.uk)

## Essential Childcare Provision at Penrice Hub

Whilst schools remain closed, we will continue to provide ESSENTIAL childcare for children of CRITICAL keyworkers or those who are classified as vulnerable. This is based at Penrice Academy. If your child requires this provision, **you must complete the booking form to secure a place by the deadline each week.** The booking form is sent via text, email and placed on our school website. If you have any difficulties, please email [secretary@poltair.cornwall.sch.uk](mailto:secretary@poltair.cornwall.sch.uk) **We will not be able to accommodate any child(ren) who has not been booked in to this facility.**

I must also reiterate the government advice which is as follows:

**The safest place for ALL children at this time is at home and you should only send your child to the Hub if there are NO OTHER CHILDCARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO YOU and for the MINIMUM possible time.**

## Returning to Poltair School when schools can re-open

Once schools are notified that we can re-open, we will be doing so in a considered way so as to reintegrate the students back in to a 'normal' way of working. We recognise that this may take some adjustment and are planning for this. Our priority is to ensure that all students and parents/carers are clear on our expectations and the need for us to work together to make this successful for all students.

Finally, please can I thank each person who has gone out of their way to offer messages of thanks and support to the school. Your sentiments have meant a great deal and been warmly welcomed at this time.

Please continue to stay at home and keep safe.

Yours sincerely,



Claire White  
Deputy Headteacher