



Newtownhamilton High School

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Dear Parent/Guardian

As we enter what will hopefully be the last few weeks of our current school closure, I want to share the following important information.

Phased Return to School

You will be aware from media reports that the NI Executive has agreed to a phased return to school with Year 12 pupils (who will be awarded qualification this Summer) returning to full-time face-to-face teaching on Monday 22nd March 2021. Year 8-11 pupils will continue to be taught remotely with Education Minister Peter Weir aiming to have all pupils returned to school “*as soon as practicably possible after the Easter break*”.

Pupil Engagement & Absence Code

During our online staff meeting this week, I was disappointed to hear reports of an increasing number of pupils who are not engaging with their teachers. I have continually stated how challenging remote learning is for everyone involved and have therefore been flexible with many pupils and parents/guardians but a pupil ignoring communication from their teachers is simply not acceptable. I therefore remind all parents/guardians about the importance of talking regularly with your child/children about their learning and to check their Google Classrooms in order to ensure that work is submitted on time.

Pupils that fail to engage with teachers are currently being recorded with the absence code (unauthorised) for “*pupils who are learning at home but have not evidenced their learning as required by the school*”. This is a requirement placed on schools by the Department of Education and may result in communication from an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Google Classroom Issue

It has been brought to my attention that some pupils are only completing work that is listed under the ‘To Do’ section of Google Classroom. This may result in a pupil missing vital preparation work that they may need to complete before they start the specific assignment for each subject (under the ‘To Do’ section).



Pupils are therefore reminded to enter every subject Google Classroom individually eg. If a pupil has Geography on a Tuesday, then they should first click on the Geography Google Classroom on that day and look at all the new material that has been uploaded for that particular lesson. This will give the pupil a better understanding of what they are being asked to complete under the ‘To Do’ section.

Remote Learning Survey

A Remote Learning Survey for all parents/guardians is now available online via a password protected page on our school website (select 'Remote Learning Survey' under the 'Key Docs' tab). The username and password has been sent to all parents via text message.

Completion of this survey should take no more than 5 minutes and participation would be greatly appreciated. The survey will close at 10pm on Wednesday 5th March.

New 'Text A Nurse' Service

I have been asked to make parents/guardians aware of a new pilot service called 'Text-a-Nurse' that uses a secure web based platform which allows a quick and easy way for school aged children across NI to get help, advice and support from a school nurse confidentially.

The service is available 9am to 5pm during the week in both term time and school holidays (excluding bank holidays) and aims to provide a secure and confidential text messaging service for young people aged 11-19. This will allow them to easily and anonymously get in touch with a school nurse for advice and support about their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Over the coming weeks, the PHA and Department of Education will be utilising a variety of methods including social media and posters to increase young people and their parents' awareness and also to share the text number widely with all pupils.

Year 10 Options

Our Vice Principal Mr Cousins and I have spent considerable time this week finalising our Year 10 Options process with information to be shared (via post and also online) early next week.

Finally, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

Neil Megaw

Principal