



Newtownhamilton High School

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Friday 1st January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

Firstly, I wish you and your family a Happy New Year. Unfortunately, 2021 has started with continued disruption to schools due to COVID-19 with Education Minister Peter Weir yesterday announcing revised plans for the reopening of our Spring term. The changes below are based on further advice on the current levels of transmission and an increasing number of positive cases.

Remote Learning

All Year 8-12 pupils will be taught remotely from 9.05am on Wednesday 6th January. Pupils should follow their normal daily timetable with learning materials/information uploaded to Google Classroom by teachers prior to the start of each lesson.

This arrangement will continue for all Year 8-11 pupils until the end of January. It is very important that pupils engage with this format of learning otherwise they will fall behind. Follow-up calls will be made to parents/guardians of pupils that fail to communicate with their teachers or submit completed work on time.

Year 12 pupils will return to school for face-to-face teaching from Monday 11th January.

SEN Support

Over the coming days, our Classroom Assistants will be allocated to pupils with statements of special educational needs. These staff members will communicate with pupils via Google Classroom and will also liaise with parents/guardians in order to provide support during this period of remote learning.

Parents/guardians with further SEN queries should contact our SEN Co-ordinator Mr Sloan (dsloan596@c2kni.net).

Technical Support

All pupils should be familiar with Google Classroom and how they use this platform to download learning materials and upload completed work. Technical support (eg logging on problems, forgotten password etc) can be obtained from our ICT Technician Mr Riddle (driddle732@c2kni.net) or ICT Co-ordinator Mr Black (jblack833@c2kni.net).

ICT Hardware

A limited number of school Ipads are available to pupils that do not have access to home computer facilities. Interested parents/guardians should contact me before 2.00pm on Tuesday 5th January.

Year 8-10 Vulnerable Pupils & Pupils of Key Workers

All schools are required to accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term. Therefore, our Year 8-10 service will operate daily from Wednesday 6th January (9.00am-3.00pm). It is noted that this is 'supervised learning' rather than face-to-face teaching. No school transport will be provided and participating pupils should wear full school uniform and bring a packed lunch.

The Department of Education defines a child of a key worker *“as a child for whom both parents (or a parent in a single parent family) is a key worker, with no other safe alternative”*. The categories of both key workers and vulnerable children are available to view from our website.

Parents/guardians who wish to avail of supervised learning should contact me via email (nmegaw549@c2kni.net) before 12 noon on Tuesday 5th January. Requests for future dates must be made before 12 noon on the previous day in order to allow sufficient time to sort staffing arrangements.

Year 12 GCSE Exams & Revision Classes

In relation to GCSE English and Maths exams timetabled during the week commencing Monday 11th January, Minister Weir has stated that *“Exams due to take place in January will be facilitated compliant with public health guidance and schools will have flexibility to deliver face-to-face teaching to pupils due to sit those exams, should they wish to do so”*.

Our Head of English Mrs Robinson has confirmed that any final preparation for the English exam on Tuesday 12th January can take place during timetabled English lessons on Monday 11th January. Mrs Robinson has also stated that both she and Miss Frazer will also be providing support to pupils remotely next week.

Mrs Taylor (Head of Maths) would prefer to deliver one final face-to-face session with pupils. Therefore, provisional arrangements have been put in place for revision sessions (foundation and higher tier) to take place in our Assembly Hall (with strict social distancing) on Friday 8th January - further information to follow on Tuesday 5th. Mrs Taylor also intends to forward online learning materials to all GCSE Maths pupils.

Year 12 Mock Exams

I am currently considering moving the Year 12 Mock Exams forward from Monday 8th February to the week commencing Monday 25th January as our Assembly Hall is fully available due to Year 8-11 remote learning.

A final decision will be made on this matter in the very near future. In the meantime, Year 12 pupils should commence their exam preparations. It is noted that these exam results may be used as evidence to produce Summer 2021 Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs), if required.

Further Queries

I trust that the above information addresses all queries, however please feel free to email me (nmegaw549@c2kni.net) if you require clarification on any matter. Alternatively, I can be contacted by telephone (02830 878246) from 8.00am on Tuesday 5th January.

To conclude, I accept that remote learning will never replace the benefits of face-to-face teaching, however the feedback received from our previous period of remote learning (March - June 2020) was generally very positive. I am therefore confident that our pupils and staff will again rise to this latest challenge. I cannot stress enough the important role that a parent/guardian will have during this period and so I encourage you to keep asking your child/children about their learning.

The achievements of Newtownhamilton High School over many years has been based on pupils, parents and staff all working in partnership. I have no doubt that our successful formula will be tested over the coming weeks but it is important that we all work together for the benefit of your child/children.

Yours faithfully

Neil Megaw

Principal