

Dear Parent/Carers,

As we approach the end of the autumn term, I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with some further updates, as well as to thank you again for your continued support of the school.

Whilst the term has continued to be particularly challenging, I am proud that our default setting has been to adapt and manage risk safely rather than to cancel activities or to curtail aspects of our provision. This has provided important stability as well as a range of opportunities which enhance the quality of education which our students experience. For example, whilst our student leadership programme had to be launched virtually this year, our students have filled 523 different roles in 27 different leadership areas from the Eco-iLeaders to the new Mental Health iLeaders, from IGS News iLeaders to Diversity iLeaders. Charities week has also had to look differently in some ways, although the values and opportunities at its core have remained the same: to think creatively; to empower a sense of team; to make a positive difference, as well as to raise awareness of, and money for, a range of good causes. Indeed, we have been prolific fundraisers this term, raising in total over £11,000.

One of the many positive pieces of feedback received from students and staff has been that inside the classroom there has been a welcomed sense of normality. In these unusual times, where the ground is forever shifting beneath our feet, to have school described as 'normal' is positive praise indeed. That does not mean it has not been tiring and I am indebted to the staff for their hard work, commitment and resilience. Managing technological challenges, complex changes to school procedures, constant movement around a challenging site, alongside the normal workload of a busy school day has not been easy. We are all certainly ready for a much-welcomed festive break.

End of Term Arrangements:

Just to confirm that school will close for staff and students on **Friday 18th at lunchtime** as scheduled. Whilst last week the Department for Education did advise schools that they could close a day earlier for Christmas, this was strictly on the condition that the day would have to be made up elsewhere in the academic year and this would have meant changing our already published term dates. Up until last Tuesday's announcement, the government had put out a strong message to schools that they could not change their holidays, and schools were informed that the Secretary of State could, under the Coronavirus Act, direct a school to remain open. In light of the late notification, the impact on the published calendar, as well as the fact we have a range of activities planned, we will stick to our original dates and timings.

However, in order to minimise different bubbles of students mixing, we will stagger the departure of students on Friday as follows:

- Years 7 and 9 will leave from 12.20pm
- Years 8, 10 and 12 will leave from 12.25pm
- Years 11 and 13 will leave from 12.30pm

School buses have been arranged and will depart at 12.42pm.

Please note, that due to the lunchtime finish, **there will not be any lunchtime catering provision on Friday 18th December** and all students will attend a full period 4 lesson from

11.30am until the time of their staggered departure. Students who are eligible for Free School Meals will be able to get a grab bag at break on Friday from either B: Hall or Armitage Café.

Coronavirus Contact Tracing Over Christmas

School leaders are required to provide contact tracing for 6 days after schools close for the Christmas holidays. For IGS, this means that senior leaders will be available, on a rota, up until midday on Christmas Eve in order to assist with contact tracing as necessary. This is deemed to be a sufficient period of time for positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in the education setting to be traced.

Should your child test positive for coronavirus in the period from the close of school on Friday 18th up until Thursday 24th December **and** they were in school in a period within 48 hours from the development of their symptoms, please will you email admin@ilkleygs.co.uk with the following details and the title Positive Covid-19 test:

- Name of child
- Tutor group/year group
- Symptoms and the date they started. It would be helpful if you would also provide an approximate time for when the symptoms started to enable contact tracing to be as accurate as possible
- Date of positive test
- A contact number for a member of the Leadership Team to obtain further details e.g. to enable identification of close social contacts at break/lunch and to and from school

We will then identify close contacts and will send a Schoolcomms to inform you if a child is required to self-isolate. For contact tracing of students within school, close contacts are defined as:

- a student who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
 - having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a student who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes
- a student who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or in a large vehicle near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

We fully appreciate that informing parents that their child is required to self-isolate is always unwelcome news and we thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding.

Schoolcomms

As you will be aware, we use Schoolcomms as our main communication system for contacting parents/carers by email or text. Service providers (for example Hotmail or Yahoo) regularly review and update their mail protocols, which can result in an increased number of messages being marked as spam or junk. If you feel you are no longer receiving Schoolcomms as expected, please follow the advice on our website [HERE](#). Once you have added us to your safe

sender list, please let the school office know and we will follow up with Schoolcomms on your behalf as the provider stops sending messages once two have been marked as spam/junk.

Coronavirus Update

Since half-term, we have had a further 13 students test positive for coronavirus. 8 of these cases did not require any students to self-isolate as the students were already self-isolating due to a positive test within the household, or the student tested positive during half-term and had not been in contact with other students in the 48-hour period prior to the onset of their symptoms. Cases which have required students to self-isolate are as follows:

- Year 7 – one case which has required 43 students to self-isolate
- Year 9 – two cases which in total required 35 students to self-isolate
- Year 12 – two cases which in total have required 46 students to self-isolate

Since September, 5 members of staff have tested positive for coronavirus, 3 of whom developed symptoms during the half-term break.

Important Whole School Timetable Changes After Christmas

In order to address some imbalances in the amount of teaching time in some of the A-Level teaching blocks as a result of the much longer period 4 this year, we need to make some adjustments to the **whole school timetable as follows**:

- The current Thursday A period 1 will swap with the current Thursday A period 4
- The current Thursday A period 2 will swap with the current Thursday A period 3
- The current Tuesday B lessons 1 and 2 will swap with Tuesday B lessons 3 and 4

So, if a student currently has, for example, maths period 1 on a Thursday A and science period 4 on the same day, from next term they will have science period 1 on Thursday A and maths period 4. The room will be swapped with the period so students will be taught in the same room for the subject, just at a different time.

Outlook calendars will update automatically at the start of the term and students will be given a revised paper copy of their timetable for ease of reference during PBT on Wednesday 6th January. The subjects which a student has on these days will not change, it is just the timings.

Temporary Change to the Timings of the Start of the Day for Years 11 and 10

For next half-term, year 11 will enter school for 8:30am and will attend registration (or go straight to their mock exam) to allow important contact and support from their tutor during this time. For the same period, year 10 will not have registration and will go immediately to period 1 at 8.40am, except on Wednesdays when they will have PBT. In order to accommodate these changes, entrances have been amended as follows:

- Year 11 – enter school via the top entrance to be in registration (or their mock exam) promptly for 8.30am
- Year 10 – enter school from the west entrance (off Cowpasture Road, by the bus layby) or the bottom gate to be in lessons for 8.40am, except when it is PBT on Wednesday when they should be in their form rooms for 8.35am

NB: Year 10 students who walk to school should aim to arrive on site just after 8.30am. Students who arrive earlier due to bus/train times are able to wait safely on site down by the courts.

Exams in 2021

- Exams will go ahead, but most will be delayed by about three weeks, taking place between 7 June and 2 July.
- One maths and one English GCSE exam will be held just before the May half-term, to give students affected by Covid a better chance of still sitting a paper in each of these subjects.
- Results days will be in the same week: Tuesday 24 August for A/AS levels and Friday 27 August for GCSEs.

A new range of measures have also been announced to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on education. These include:

- More generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020.
- Students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision.
- Exam aids - like formula sheets - provided in some exams to give students more confidence and to reduce the amount of information they need to memorise. Further details are due to be published at the end of January.
- Additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation. Please note, the additional contingency exams are scheduled from the 28th June to the 16th July 2021 and students in year 11 and 13 should not book holidays for this period in case they are required to sit a paper in this additional series.

Ofqual has published a consultation seeking views about the advance information and support materials to be provided for GCSEs, AS and A level exams in 2021. Parents and students are able to respond to the short survey Ofqual has set up. This is open until Sunday 20 December. Ofqual has also produced a news story and video explaining the proposals.

New contingency framework

The DfE has published an updated Covid contingency framework for education and childcare settings. This replaces the previous (never used) four-tier Contain Framework and sets out how restrictions would work in education in the rare circumstances they are needed. Key points are as follows:

- The restrictions are intended to be used only as a last resort and may only be initiated following a ministerial decision on a case-by-case basis. An educational setting should not implement the contingency framework without the explicit agreement of the DfE.
- The framework should not be used to address operational challenges, including staff shortages.

- Secondary schools would only be able to allow vulnerable children, children of critical workers, students in years 11 and 13 and other students due to take external exams this academic year, to attend if restrictions were enforced.

Return After Christmas

School re-opens for all years on Monday 4th January 2021. It is a week A.

On a final note, this week we say goodbye to Mrs Sarah Denison, our School-to-School Support and KS5 Lead in Maths and Dr Neil Garrido, Head of Chemistry. I would like to thank both colleagues for their dedication to the school and wish them both well in the next phase of their careers, both in exciting non-teaching roles within education. After Christmas, we welcome Mrs Samantha Batch as Head of Chemistry and Mr Nick Waites as Teacher of Maths.

Thank you again to all members of our community for your support, cooperation and feedback. I hope you and your families all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Best wishes,

Carly Purnell

Headteacher