

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we approach the end of the half-term and another extensive period of remote learning, I am writing to reflect on what has been achieved at Ilkley Grammar School over the last few weeks, as well as provide some important information about upcoming events, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Parents' Information Evening, and some small changes to the school day which are being introduced after the holiday.

The further development and increased frequency of live lessons since the first lockdown has been met with overwhelming positivity and we are pleased that this is enabling students to maintain structure and continuity in their education, as well as providing the opportunity for valuable interaction with their peers and teachers. We do not underestimate the additional challenges which remote learning presents, both in terms of extended screen time and keeping up self-motivation, but our dedicated pastoral and inclusion teams continue to provide support to both students and their families to try to keep students on track with their learning, and we continue to review and adapt our provision.

Since the 5th January, we have awarded over 135,000 positives on ClassCharts including over 40,000 for effort, alongside Head of Year awards and Personal Best certificates. In many ways, business has continued as normal, not just in terms of the delivery of the curriculum, but also with the continuation of a number of calendared events. These have included:

- **External examinations** in some of our applied courses: Health and Social Care; IT and Hospitality and Catering. Congratulations must be extended to the year 11 and post-16 students who sat these exams. They showed tremendous resilience at a time when the government had just announced that other examinations for GCSE, AS and A Level courses had been cancelled.
- **Student Wellbeing Week**
Building on the launch of our mental health handbook, students were signposted to lots of resources and different self-care strategies. Further information to promote good mental health and wellbeing is available on the school website [HERE](#) and is the focus of our upcoming Parents' Information Evening, details of which are below.
- **Remote Year 9 Parents' Evening**
- **Options Launch**
The year 9 options launch took place via Microsoft Teams on the 27th January, and all tutor groups have had follow up sessions with a member of the Leadership Team. The year 8 options launch takes place this Wednesday, 10th February. Both year groups and parents/carers are invited to a remote Options Evening on Wednesday 3rd March where further information and support will be available to help students make informed decisions.
- **Post-16 Taster Day**
Our first ever remote Taster Day was a phenomenal success with record numbers of current year 11 IGS students and those looking to join us from other schools in attendance online. Large scale events like this do not just come together by chance and thanks go to the staff and the post-16 team for the huge amount of time, organisation and effort, both behind the scenes and during the day, to make it a positive experience for the students.

The day closed with a Cutting-Edge talk from Brendan O'Reilly, Chief Technical Officer of O2. If you would like to hear what he had to say, which was both thought-provoking and relevant to students in all year groups, we are making a link to the recording available on our website and also via the [LINK HERE](#). The website will also detail Brendan's responses to the 3 questions posed during his talk.

•UCAS and Apprenticeship Offers

As you may have seen from the recent article in the [Ilkley Gazette](#), a record-breaking eight IGS students have recently received offers to study at Oxford or Cambridge: Ben Radick; Polly Bridges; Izzy Matear; Emma Whitaker-Pitts; Brodie Gibson; Lois Logan; Reuben Baldwin; and Gina Remmer

This is a fantastic achievement for the students personally, but also for IGS as an inclusive, non-selective state school. Securing places at Oxbridge is undoubtedly a tremendous accolade, but we recognise that it is only one of many ways of measuring success. We are equally proud of all of our year 13 students, who are displaying high levels of resilience, commitment and engagement, many of whom are currently receiving offers on a wide range of competitive courses at universities, medical schools and high-quality apprenticeships.

Parents' Information Evening: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Thank you for all your responses, helpful suggestions and comments in relation to our online Parents' Information Evening on supporting mental health and wellbeing at home. We received 320 responses and, as a result, we will schedule two sessions. The first session will take place this week

Thursday 11th February at 6 pm and is available to all parents/carers via the link [HERE](#):

It is expected to last no longer than an hour and 15 minutes and will include an opportunity for Q&A at the end. This session will be recorded so that parents who are unable to make it can watch it at a later time at their convenience.

The key foci will be:

- Better understanding the teenage brain
- Ways to talk about mental health at home
- Encouraging self-care (including better sleep and physical activity)
- Strategies for supporting anxiety, depression, and panic attacks
- School support systems for mental health and wellbeing and accessing support beyond school
- Signposting bespoke resources

Supporting Students to be Healthy Learners

After half-term, on **Thursday 25 February at 6pm** we will run an abridged version of the mental health and wellbeing session, and will take much of the time to explore Healthy Learning. This will focus on healthy learning habits, both for remote learning and in-school learning. More details about the event will follow after the half-term break.

We also want to continue to build on the work completed in the Student Wellbeing week and further support our students in being healthy learners and regulating their screen time. We

are very fortunate at IGS to have the technology and 1:1 devices to be able to provide remote education successfully and to continue to teach a full curriculum despite the current circumstances. However, we also recognise that due to school closures, there is an unavoidable side-effect of increased screen time coupled with the fact that most secondary school students also use various social media platforms to stay connected to family and friends. We are therefore dedicating this Wednesday Period 5 as a 'Screen-Break Challenge' lesson to highlight to students the importance of taking part in hobbies and activities that don't always rely on technology, particularly in lockdown. This will mean that **remote lessons will finish after Period 4 on Wednesday 10th February only**, allowing students the extended afternoon to practise self-care. We have suggested some ideas on the attached sheet to inspire students and staff to move away from their screens for the afternoon. Students will also be encouraged to share with their tutor group what they do to take a break from screens so we can collate even more ideas. We look forward to celebrating the diverse interests and vast array of hobbies of our students and would encourage you or your child to share them on Twitter tagging @ilkleygrammarschool and #IGSscreenbreakchallenge. The irony is not lost that this will involve technology but we feel it is important to share as many ideas as possible, particularly as we face another school holiday in lockdown.

In addition to the Screen Break Challenge, students in Key Stage 3 will soon be invited to participate in a sponsored virtual walk around the world. The importance of physical activity is proven to have a positive impact on mental wellbeing. The Student Council are keen to get students active following weeks of remote learning whilst also supporting a local Addingham man, Jaime Lunn, who suffered a life-changing spinal injury last year and raise money to facilitate renovations to his family home. The challenge will start over half term and end on Friday 26th February. More details will follow from Mr Carr tomorrow.

Adjustments to The Remote School Day

In addition, after half-term and whilst we remain in lockdown, we are making some small changes to the school day, to ensure students and staff can get a short break away from their screens rather than have back to back lessons.

- Ordinarily, students/staff would have movement time between lessons and to replicate this, periods 2, 4 and 6 will start 5 minutes later whilst remote learning for all continues.
- The longer period 4 will also finish at 12.30 (12.50 on Wednesdays) for all students in Key Stage 3 (years 7-9), thereby adding 15 minutes onto lunch. This has been optional for staff this half-term, but we are now asking for this to be enforced by all who teach KS3 during period 4.
- In years 10-13, staff have the flexibility to finish period 4 earlier and start lunch between 12.30-12.45pm (12.50-1.05pm on Wednesdays) dependent on the needs of the curriculum.
- The remote school day will therefore be as follows:

Time	Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays	Wednesdays
8:30	Tutor time and registration	Tutor time and registration +PBT 8:30-9:00
8:40-9:30	Period 1	9-9:50
9:30-9:35	5 mins break	9:50-9:55
9:35-10:20	Period 2	9:55-10:40
10:20-10:40	BREAK	10:40-11
10:40-11:30	Period 3	11-11:50
11:30-11:35	5 mins break	11:50-11:55
11:35-12:30 11:35-12:45	Period 4 KS3 Period 4 KS4 and 5 unless earlier lunch appropriate	11:55-12:50 Period 4 KS3 11:55-1:05 Period 4 KS4/5 unless earlier lunch appropriate
12:30-1:25 12:45-1:25	LUNCH KS3 LUNCH KS4/5	12:50-1:45 Lunch KS3 1:05- 1:45 Lunch KS4
1:25-2:10	Period 5	1:45-2:35
2:10-2:15	5 mins break	No period 6
2:15-3:05	Period 6	

- On days where there is a Parents' Evening, students in that year group will not have their last lesson of the day. This is to ensure that they have a break from their screens before attending Parents' Evening remotely. We would encourage them to complete another activity from the "Screen-Break Challenge". This next applies to year 8 who have Parents' Evening on Tuesday 23rd February.

NB: For staff involved in Parents' Evening, we are encouraging them to use pre-recorded delivery or much shorter live elements from period 4 onwards on the day of the evening given that their on-screen appointments start shortly after the school day and continue in many cases continuously up to 7pm.

Qualifications 2021

It remains uncertain what arrangements will be put in place nationally for students in years 11 and 13, and students in year 12 due to complete AS qualifications this year following the cancellation of exams. The joint consultations on GCSE, AS and A levels and on vocational and technical qualifications closed at the end of January with over 103,000 responses. Ofqual are currently analysing the responses and plan to publish next steps during the week beginning 22nd February.

On the day the consultation closed, Ofqual published this blog: [Consultation update and a proposal for externally-set papers](#). Whilst it is likely that the grades submitted by teachers will

need to draw on a wide range of evidence, including the possibility of the completion of some externally set papers, we will wait for confirmation before detailing our school plans. Whilst we appreciate that the current uncertainty is worrying for students, we do not think it is in their best interests to act on speculation.

Our advice to students in exam years therefore remains the same: keep focussing on your learning, ensuring you continue studying the curriculum; attend and actively engage with all remote lessons; approach assessment tasks as an opportunity to practise applying your knowledge, skills and understanding and receive feedback to help you further improve; and balance your learning with practising self-care to look after your physical and emotional wellbeing. A separate communication to students and parents in exam years will be sent within the next couple of days.

Coronavirus Testing

Following the commencement of lateral flow device (LFD) asymptomatic testing for staff who are regularly attending school, we will offer two coronavirus tests 3-5 days apart to all students who are currently accessing on site provision (the children of key workers and students who are considered more vulnerable) in the week after half-term. More detailed information will be sent tomorrow to the parents/carers of students involved. Please note, student testing is encouraged, but is not compulsory, and will only take place if consent has been provided.

We expect that when schools do start to re-open, mass testing will be expected to continue and all students will be offered testing in school on their return to identify asymptomatic cases and therefore help to reduce transmission. However, serial testing of close contacts of a positive case has now been paused by the government and is no longer available as an alternative to self-isolation. Anybody identified as a close contact will continue to need to isolate for 10 days in line with current guidance.

Full Re-Opening of Schools

As you will be aware, the Prime Minister announced last month that the **earliest** date upon which schools could expect to return to 'normal' operation and opening would be **March 8th** and **not** straight after the half-term holiday as originally proposed. Any decisions confirming a date for reopening will be dependent on the outcomes of a wider national review on 22nd February. It may be that some type of phased or gradual re-opening will be recommended, but we await further details of this.

No Child Cold Initiative

No Child Cold is a Bradford district wide campaign to raise money to provide direct help to families who may now be experiencing financial insecurity due to the coronavirus pandemic. It has been set up by Bradford partners to make sure that no child in the Bradford District is left in the cold this winter as a result of lockdown.

Please see the attached flyer for full details but essentially this scheme is raising funds from the kindness and generosity of businesses, organisations and individuals across the district. This money will be used to give small grants to the district's families who have higher fuel bills because children are at home instead of at school, and who might not otherwise be able to pay their fuel bill.

If you would like to support this project you can do this directly through the [Give Bradford](#) page.

The scheme is being run by Citizens Advice and will take referrals directly from schools and the voluntary sector. Recipients of the grant will live in a household where at least one of the following applies:

- household income, of those responsible for bills, has fallen due to a reduction in wages, either because of a reduction in working hours, a loss of regular overtime or a member of the household has been furloughed.
- The family is a low-income household (defined as being in receipt of Universal Credit, tax credits or other income related DWP / local authority benefit) and fuel costs have increased as a result of children being at home because of school closures.
- The family live in a household where the child would be entitled to free school meals and fuel costs have increased because the children have had to stay at home because of school closures.

If you think you may be eligible for a grant under this scheme and would like school to progress a referral on your behalf, please can you send an email, in strict confidence, to joy.heyworth@ilkleygs.co.uk

Half-Term Holiday

School finishes this Friday 12th February, with remote learning re-starting on **Tuesday 23rd February** in line with our published calendar.

However, whilst the site is closed over this period, we are delighted to be part of another fantastic Ilkley Community Initiative, developed by the Ilkley Youth and Community Association, to provide some of our families with 'Half Term Meal Kits'. Essentially these parcels will include five meals for four people, complete with all ingredients and recipe cards, plus additional food for breakfasts and lunches. IGS staff have volunteered to facilitate this project as we know it will make a difference to some of our students and their families in what remain difficult times.

I would like to again thank all parents/carers who have written to us with kind messages of support and appreciation – these are always warmly received by staff who are working hard to support the children in our care.

Thank you also for supporting, encouraging and motivating students at home with their remote learning. We fully appreciate the challenges posed by the current lockdown restrictions and the additional demands on families. I'm sure we all look forward to a time when we can return to some semblance of normality.

Best Wishes,
Carly Purnell
Headteacher