



THE APPLETON SCHOOL

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Achieving Excellence



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Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope you are all well at this time and I wish you all a Happy New Year. We have heard much on the news in the last few days concerning education that I thought it was best to wait until we had a few further details before writing to you in detail.

You will all be aware that the Prime Minister said on Monday evening that MOST exams would be cancelled but “some exams in some subjects may, in some form, still be a possibility”. We then heard on Wednesday afternoon from the Secretary Of State for Education that all exams would be cancelled but there would be some form of teacher assessment. Please note he did not suggest Centre Assessed Grades which was the final format for GCSE and A Level results in the summer of 2020. At present we have no further details of what this might mean in practice for our students. As soon as we have further detail we will of course make sure that we communicate with you immediately.

The Secretary of State for Education also in his statement to the House of Commons spoke of students in Years 11 and 13. He made no mention of students in other year groups who should be taking GCSE or A level examinations who are not in these year groups. We are therefore asking for further detail on how this impacts on students in Years 10 and 12 some of whom were due to take examinations this summer. I will let you know when we have any further details on this matter. I will also be contacting our local MP to get further detail on this matter.

It should be noted that initially there was no detail on BTEC qualifications at all, therefore we have needed to run these examinations beginning on Wednesday this week. Later in the day on Wednesday we were informed we could cancel these examinations if we wished but were given no further details on how this might impact on students. The implied suggestion was that students may need to take these exams in the summer at this point they would then have no re-sit opportunity. We have therefore taken the decision to run the vocational examinations for the small number of students who were scheduled to take these exams during this period. Our current assumption is that if students do not sit this examination in January they will be required to sit it in June. This however is our understanding as opposed to a definitive statement on this matter.

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In terms of our online learning programme we are trying to operate most of our sessions as live lessons. This is not always possible as we do have a number of staff who have currently tested positive with Covid 19. If you have any issues with the online learning programme please do contact the school. You will remember during the first lockdown we provided workbooks for students; I believe our current provision is far superior to this but we are also as staff still adapting to teaching in this way. We do appreciate that this is not home schooling. We appreciate that if you had wished your child to be home schooled they would not be enrolled in a main stream secondary school.

Please also appreciate that whilst our staff have had four years of training at degree level to be in the classroom, they have needed to learn how to teach online in the last six months. Whilst we occasionally have a couple of lessons where technology lets us down, I do believe that on the whole all teachers have responded to this task professionally and are doing the best they can in the circumstances. Please be reassured that all staff would prefer to be teaching in person when it is safe to do so.

A few parents have contacted the school this week to say they were concerned about lesson cancellation notifications coming through to students. Just to clarify these are the notifications that are sent only once a live lesson has finished and not a cancellation of any current or future scheduled lessons. I hope the above clarifies this communication.

We spent part of our time during the Christmas break setting up our Covid testing station in school. At that point we thought we needed to test every child and every member of staff once per week; that is just under 2000 tests per week. To do this we would have needed to recruit and train 21 full time volunteers. Following Monday's announcement we now are required to test with the consent of parents any child on site and any member of staff on site. This is approximately 300 tests per week which is much more achievable. We have therefore managed to recruit 8 volunteers who have completed their training and our onsite testing will begin on Monday for those students and staff who are on site. The concept behind this initiative is that we should be able to stop students or staff who are asymptomatic being on our site. We continue to regularly update our school Risk Assessment relating to Covid 19 and we will publish our new Risk Assessment on our website later this week for your information. We have been told by the Local Authority that infections in Castle Point are now amongst the highest in the country and we all must do everything we can to keep ourselves and our families as safe as possible during this period.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs K. Kerridge

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kerridge', written in a cursive style.

Headteacher