

7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you well and that you have had a smooth start to this new lockdown with online and live lessons supporting your child to continue their learning. Although I have written to you recently, it does seem that every day brings new changes and challenges which require another update.

### **Year 11 exams**

If you are the parent of a Year 11 student, you will have seen the news that all GCSE and A-Level examinations this summer have been cancelled. I realise that this will have come as a huge shock and disappointment to you and your children and will inevitably mean an anxious few weeks ahead.

Students studying BTEC and vocational courses will also have their examinations cancelled whilst we work with examination boards to ensure they are given the best possible opportunity to succeed. Parents will be updated as soon as possible on any requirements to submit ongoing assessed work in the coming months.

The government has committed to allowing teachers to be the driving force behind the grades given this summer (although we await more detail) and so the work that is going on remotely is vital to build up the portfolio of evidence that will be required to support those grades. It is therefore essential that Year 11 students continue to log in to their live lessons and complete their other resources to enable the teachers to make a fair and balanced assessment of the progress they are making. When we are more informed on the likely return date of students to school, we will pull together plans to ensure students also receive appropriate, standardised assessments to support the judgments that will be made.

Of course learning is not just about grades; students should continue to enjoy the expert subject knowledge they can pick up from their teachers, as well as deepening their understanding in preparation for the future studies we know so many of them will pursue.

### **Online learning and support materials**

Online learning and live lessons should now be in full swing and I hope that all students have been able to access this provision. I'm delighted that students will be able to follow the timetables published on the website and receive a minimum of two live lessons a day through the Teams platform, alongside the pre-recorded and resourced learning sessions that are also uploaded. The live lesson timetable will be reviewed and updated occasionally, so please check the website regularly to ensure your child is following the latest version.

I urge you to support your child's education by ensuring they are up and ready to learn each day, and by checking in on them regularly to see the progress they have made. We are investigating ways to alert parents if their child is regularly missing live learning sessions and will be in touch with more details soon. An immense amount of work has gone into ensuring that our provision allows all students to access high quality teaching and learning during this lockdown and our staff are keen to ensure all children are supported; please ensure they log in and complete the work!

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**Hartfield Crescent, Acocks Green, B27 7QG | 0121 628 1311 | [enquiry@ninestiles.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@ninestiles.org.uk)**

### **Vulnerable and Key Worker provision**

Ninestiles, An Academy remains open to our vulnerable students and the children of our key workers as we support the national lockdown effort. If you think that you may be eligible to access a place in this provision and have not been doing so already, please contact the school for details. Proof of key worker status will be required, for example a letter from your employer or a copy of your ID badge, before we can provide a place. Whilst in school, students will be following the live learning timetable and accessing all support materials with the help of our dedicated on site staff.

### **Free school meals**

All parents who are eligible for free school meals should have received their supermarket voucher for this week. We are awaiting more details from the government on the plan moving forwards and will support families as quickly as we can as developments arise.

### **School contact**

The school will be keeping in regular contact with students and families during this time both through the Teams platform and also with regular phone calls to those who require additional support. If you have any concerns about how we can support you and your child, please ensure you pass these on.

### **Support**

We realise that this is an incredibly challenging time and many of you may have experienced changing circumstances, health problems and bereavement. We are here to help as much as possible, whether directly through the expertise of our staff at Ninestiles, or through putting you in touch with the wide range of agencies and support provisions that we work with. You will find a comprehensive list on the safeguarding section of our website [Safeguarding – Ninestiles An Academy](#).

### **Channels of communication**

I'm sure you appreciate that the current situation can change rapidly and frequently, requiring regular updates from us to all members of the school community. We will continue to send you these letters but you can also find information on our school website and updates on our Twitter account @ninstiles.

I fully understand what a challenging time this is for everyone, but I personally am taking comfort from, and feel very proud of, the support we are providing each other. Our dedicated staff are working tirelessly to ensure that students continue to receive the high quality education they deserve, and to support families to get through this lockdown. We *will* get through this together.

Best wishes



Alex Hughes  
Principal