

18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear parents/carers,

### Continuing to Learn from Home & Access for Year 10

Following on from my letter of last week, the government has announced that it is asking all secondary schools to allow Year 10 students to receive some element of face-to-face time with teachers during the second half of this term. For Nova, this may begin as early as the week of 8<sup>th</sup> June.

This is very good news as it means each school can define a model which starts to bring students back to school in a safe and controlled manner and which minimises the risk both to them, their families and to staff. There is, however, currently no further update as to when any other secondary year groups will be able to return.

Before Nova reopens to any students, we will make sure that we are fully prepared and can meet the hygiene and social distancing requirements that the government's scientists will expect of us.

As I mentioned in my letter last week, we will of course be continuing to operate our learning from home programme until students return to school. It is vitally important that every student accesses this provision. I would urge you to please carry on encouraging your children to access the full programme. The majority of students are fully engaged with their online learning and we want every student to benefit from it. As a school, we will continue to do everything we can to make it as straightforward as possible for you and for them.

I have had a few requests for clarification from parents about two aspects of the programme:

### Feedback

As you're aware, since the Easter break we have enabled three new functions on ePraise: submission, forms and quizzing. This means that teachers can gather specific pieces of work or responses to specific questions and provide feedback. This kind of targeted response is preferable to them requesting students submit all of the work in their exercise books or from their computers. Teachers can provide this feedback to their students either individually or as a whole class in the following session or via messenger. Each of the Faculty Leaders in our subject areas has set a minimum expectation in terms of the regularity of the feedback which will be provided to students. This means that the level of feedback is appropriate to the specific aspect of the curriculum being taught.

### Live Online Lessons

Up to now, we have made the decision not to use 'live teaching' through video linking technology with students. We know that some staff in other schools are trialing this with their classes with mixed results. However, I have not asked staff to do this at Nova and there is no obligation for them to do so. Below is a list of reasons why we have chosen not to go down this route.

*\* Drive \* Integrity \* Scholarship \* Contribution*



- In general, this is not a good way to teach large groups of younger students. Where schools are using this, it is more often than not with sixth form students who are usually 'muted' which results in more of a live lecture. This is not how we are used to teaching at Nova and not how students learn best for long periods of time.
- There are logistical issues with access. It could be completely impossible for both teachers and students with other siblings and parents working from home to be online at specific fixed points in the day. We know that a number of our students are sharing screens with other members of their families.
- As we have found using TEAMS for meetings, there are also often technical issues where clarity is lost.
- There can be issues of safeguarding and the potential for inappropriate behaviour or allegations, which are only now being ironed out as other schools have been trialing the technology.
- Managing student engagement is also difficult to do in a live setting without the normal strategies at our disposal.

Having said all of this, we know that pre-recorded materials can obviously be a great learning resource. This is best done using short clips of prerecorded material. Some of our staff have been producing these themselves whilst others are signposting students to materials produced by others. These kinds of materials were popular with parents and students in our recent surveys. We will continue to research and review digital resources that best serve our students. We will, of course, let you know of any further changes to our home learning strategy so that you can continue to support your child effectively.

Over the coming weeks, I will be keeping you all regularly updated on progress towards the re-opening of the school and will be contacting parents and students in Year 10, in particular, over the next week to outline how they will begin to receive face-to-face time with their teachers.

The school does remain closed for all students other than those who are already aware that they are able to attend the Frontline School which remains based at our cluster sister school, Swindon Academy for now. If your child is eligible to attend and is not currently doing so, please do contact us so that we can discuss how best this can be arranged.

All of us look forward to welcoming students back to school as soon as is safely possible. We are greatly missing them. In the meantime, please keep safe and well and encourage your children to continue to participate in their online learning.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Wells', with a stylized, flowing script.

Nick Wells  
**Headteacher**