



8 September 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

### **Welcome to the new academic year**

It was an absolute pleasure to welcome students back to school last week and all year groups have had a really positive first few days. Students in years 9 to 11 had welcome assemblies by half-year group in the sports hall plus extended time with form tutors where they undertook various activities. Particular emphasis was given to going through our new arrangements around hygiene, distancing, bubbles, timings of the day and movement around school, with our new year 9s being given tours. Our sixth form students had extended welcome assemblies on Friday, with lessons starting for all this week.

In lessons, teachers have been focusing on re-establishing routines alongside introducing new curriculum content. Student engagement has been excellent. Teachers will assess and address gaps in knowledge relating to work set during the lockdown period on an ongoing basis, with additional support to be provided in a variety of ways over time. Ms Platts and Mrs Innes will be writing in due course to parents of year 11 and 13 students respectively regarding support and guidance for these year groups, given their particular circumstance of being part way through GCSE and A Level courses that are due to be examined at the end of this academic year.

Behind the scenes, we are determining arrangements to support students working remotely from home, should this requirement come to pass at any stage in the academic year. This will involve online teaching, the setting of tasks and activities and the provision of direct support from teachers. As part of this, all students will be issued with individual school email accounts over the next week or so and will receive guidance on appropriate and safe use. Mrs Minto will be writing to parents later this half term with fuller details. In the short term, we have measures in place to enable the small number of students unable to be in school due to self-isolation to keep up with the curriculum. Should this affect your son or daughter at any stage, we will provide you with the specific details directly.

### **Ongoing safe return**

Thank you for supporting our new arrangements in school by talking them through with your son/daughter in the days before we returned. The degree of student attentiveness in the assemblies last week was exactly what we were looking for and they have approached the new requirements with real maturity.

We are issuing regular reminders to students about the importance of good hand and respiratory hygiene, requiring hands to be cleaned on entry to every classroom and before break and lunch, as well as adherence to the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. We encourage students to bring their own hand sanitiser and tissues to school although these are located in every classroom and at other key points.

With all year groups now fully back in school, we are monitoring our arrangements each day to ensure that they are operating well and we will make adjustments as necessary. I shall write to you to update you on any significant changes to our approach, should these be needed.

Should your son or daughter develop symptoms of coronavirus, as per the NHS [guidance](#), it is essential that they do not attend school and that you follow procedures outlined in that guidance. Should they develop symptoms whilst in school, we will of course contact you to make arrangements for them to leave the premises.

Public Health England (PHE) are concerned about the possibility of a surge in test demand as England's schools return. Their director of health protection has written to headteachers asking us to write to parents with the following information, to ensure that PHE continue to prioritise testing capacity for those with symptoms and to avoid students and their families self-isolating unnecessarily:

*If a pupil, student or staff member develops one or more of the main coronavirus symptoms described above, only they should be tested. There is no need for their households to have a test, unless they are also symptomatic. Unless a pupil, student or staff member has one of the three main coronavirus symptoms, they should only be tested if instructed otherwise by the local authority, health protection team or their GP. As schools and colleges across England return, pupils and students may feel unwell for example with a sore throat, stomach upset or a headache. These pupils and students don't need to book a test but may need to stay off school or college and seek medical advice through their GP or pharmacist as usual.*

## **Staffing**

We are delighted to welcome the following new teachers to the school: Mr Blair and Ms Dolan in Maths (with Mr Blair the new curriculum leader), Ms Ritson in Art and Mr Cameron in PE. We also welcome two middle leaders to the senior team for the year ahead: Mr Hedley, who will lead our provision around students' personal development, and Mrs Hodgson, who will have a teaching and learning focus. They will retain their curriculum leader responsibilities in PSHE and history respectively. For full details of senior and middle leadership at the school, please see [here](#). Mr Seaton, our new Head of School, joins us in January.

### **Extra-curricular provision**

We have taken the decision to press pause on extra-curricular activity in these early weeks of the new term to give us time to adjust to our new arrangements. However, in the near future we hope to give staff the go ahead to launch our offer, albeit with some restrictions including limiting provision to single year groups at any one time. Students will be informed about the opportunities in due course.

### **Communication**

We encourage students and parents/carers to follow us on our social media accounts, which are:

<https://www.facebook.com/QEHSHexham>

<https://twitter.com/QEHSHexham>

Please also look at our website from time to time, which contains regular updates in the [news](#) section.

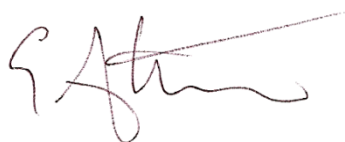
### **New build**

I am pleased to report that building work has progressed well over the summer and we remain on track to move into our new accommodation this time next year. We have successfully vacated our Hydro building, with art, languages, history and social sciences now re-located to our 'village' of temporary accommodation, with music and design technology having moved to converted rooms in the lower school.

Finally, thank you for your ongoing support of the school, particularly over recent months. It has been very much appreciated.

With all good wishes.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Atkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr G Atkins  
Executive Headteacher