



# WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

6th November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I understand that keeping schools open, while the majority of the country abides by the new national restrictions creates a conflict in our priorities. With over a million fatalities globally and 47,000 in the UK, managing the risk to ourselves and our families must be our top priority. However, I also believe that education secures the long term future of our children and being in the classroom is the best place to ensure that.

This short anecdote from when I taught in state schools in Botswana in the 1990's illustrates my views on this conflict. My school was a senior secondary school in Mochudi, a large village in which the children would walk for many miles to reach the school at 7am. It rarely rained but in the winter there were frequent electrical storms and lighting strikes were common. With a storm forecast the next day and knowing the dangers of walking to school, I tried to persuade my form to delay coming to school the next morning. Most listened to me this but a group of boys did not and one was seriously injured when he was hit with lightning. When he returned to school he came to apologise to me for 'being off school'; when I asked him why he had taken the risk, he looked at me aghast and said, 'Teacher, learning will save me; the lighting will not stop that'.

Watford Girls will stay open and learning will take place, however there are some changes that may affect your daughter:

- year 12 students will not be permitted to leave the site during lunchtime
- year 13 students must stay on-site between their first and last lesson, but they may continue to arrive late and leave early depending on their timetable
- classroom windows and doors are being kept open throughout the day. This means it is colder than usual in the school and so I have allowed the girls to wear their coats on top of (not instead of) their school jumpers and blazers. Girls may also wear gloves and scarfs
- unfortunately the government have now announced that schools are unable to continue with sports clubs. This means that all sports clubs will be suspended during lockdown. Please follow @WGCSP on Instagram for updates about clubs once they are able to resume

- we continue to monitor and follow Government and Governing Body's advice regarding activities in PE lessons, to ensure we can offer students an engaging but safe curriculum. We have received several queries regarding swimming lessons and the site team is working incredibly hard to ensure that swimming lessons can continue as normal. The swimming pool is a very safe place for students; the chemicals used in the water are effective in killing viruses and bacteria. We have implemented a one-way system with students using two different changing rooms before and after their lessons. This enables the changing rooms to be thoroughly cleaned throughout the day, using specialist cleaning machines
- swimming pools and leisure centres have been closed as part of the lockdown due to the public mixing; as our students are in year group bubbles, we do not have these concerns
- the only reason for students not to continue with swimming lessons this term is if they have a medical condition preventing them from entering the pool and we will therefore expect all students who are currently swimming in lessons, to be in the water
- you may be aware that staff who are **clinically extremely vulnerable** are required to work from home during these heightened restrictions. This means that some teaching staff will need to teach live contact lessons through Teams, whilst the girls work on their devices in the classroom. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 will have an adult providing supervision whilst they work.

Analysis of reports have shown that girls are making good progress when they are in school - far better than any progress made remotely. I also think that the girls are happier and more challenged when they learn alongside their peers and so we will continue to work as hard as we can to keep as many of your daughters in school as possible.

## Parents' Association Raffle Tickets

The PA is launching their annual raffle this week. The importance of this raffle is even greater this year because the Christmas Fair cannot take place. The funds raised by the PA are invested directly into the facilities used by your daughter, for example refurbishment of the library and the multi-use games area. This year they are focusing their efforts on improving access to IT in the school, something all the girls need.

Please can you make a huge effort to buy the tickets or encourage your daughter to sell as many as she can. Spare books of tickets are available and the ticket stubs and cash should be placed in a sealed envelope and then given to your daughter to place in the post box by the main gate or to give to a member of the Senior Leadership Team at the school gate.

## A reminder to Year 7 parents

Please provide permission for your daughter to receive the nasal flu immunisation on Wednesday 11th November. All details can be found on ParentMail.

## Congratulations

Huge congratulations to Brigitta McKeever who was a Top 15 winner of the Foyle Young Poet of the Year Award.

## **Message from London Northwestern Railway**

A very quick note this morning to confirm that London Northwestern Railway will be continuing to run its existing timetable throughout this period of enhanced government restrictions.

For four weeks starting tomorrow, unnecessary travel is being discouraged as part of the range of measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus. However, the government has made it clear the railway remains open for those travelling to school or college.

With the possibility of coronavirus impacting on the availability of train crew at short notice, we do advise passengers to check their journeys before travelling (at [www.lnr.uk/plan](http://www.lnr.uk/plan) or on twitter @LNRailway), and a quick reminder that wearing a face covering on board remains mandatory, unless exempt on medical grounds.

I would like to draw your attention to a letter from the Hertfordshire Police titled: Safety message following reported drug incidents at two secondary schools - Watford and Bushey. We cannot be complacent about the use of Xanax or other drugs.

Best wishes,

Sylvia Tai