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Dear Parents and Carers of Key Stage Five Students at Talacre and WES,

First of all, I would like to wish you a happy - albeit strange and difficult - new year!

As you are aware, the start of this term has been unlike any other. Education is now mostly taking place online, though it will be in school, as normal, for some students (details below). We also have some space for students whose parents are key workers, or who are vulnerable. We also may be able to help with technology, if your son / daughter needs internet access, or a computer, to be able to complete the tasks being set, or access the live lessons. Please do let me know if you think your son / daughter may need any sort of extra support with their education at this time.

Anyone who comes into school or college to attend lessons, or assessments, or pastoral care, will be asked to take a Lateral Flow Test. These tests are being conducted in the Sixth Form Centre on Highgate Road, and everyone attending school regularly (staff and students) will be asked to take them on a weekly basis, to try and stop the spread of this terrible disease. We expect everyone in our school community to do all they can to keep all in the community safe, by wearing masks in communal areas, washing their hands frequently and keeping their distance from those in a different household.

There is (understandably) a great deal of anxiety at the moment, about the arrangements for assessing how well students might be doing and have done on their courses. I am afraid I can't yet offer you any clarity on these matters, though I hope to be able to do so soon after the final arrangements are made clear to schools (hopefully tomorrow). I think it very important to remember, though, that exam results aren't everything - perhaps not something you hear a teacher often say in public! Your son / daughter's education is important because it gets them to the next stage of their lives - whether that is university, college, an apprenticeship or straight into a job. But it is not just the piece of paper with the result on that gets you into whatever your next stage is, it is the process that you go through to get that piece of paper that is important – therefore I ask you to support us in making sure that your son / daughter continues to attend lessons (either online or in person, depending on what course they are on), in order to make sure that they have the skills necessary for the next phase of their lives.

We have lots of students following different courses, and the arrangements are slightly different for different courses. You will receive, in due course, an email that details the precise arrangements for the course(s) your son / daughter is following.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions, or if you would like to request extra support.

Yours in kindness,

Flora Wilson

Director of Sixth Form

William Ellis School