

January 8th 2020

Dear Parents & Carers

As during the lockdown last spring and summer, I will aim to update you each Friday. There is a huge amount of information to absorb at the moment and schools have had to respond very quickly to fast changing circumstances. None of us want to be in a situation where our young people are not in school but I would certainly like to record my thanks to all the staff for the way they have dealt with the demands of this week.

Remote Learning

We are in a much stronger position regarding remote learning now than we were last March but there will inevitably be teething troubles as we roll out online learning for everyone one of our students. Please do get in touch with us if there are still any issues with access to devices- we have loaned out nearly 90 laptops so far – as we do want to ensure everyone can access the learning. Lessons will not always be live as that can disadvantage some students and it might be best that students get in some exercise during the day rather being at a screen for 5 hours on the run but around 50% of teaching time should be live and this will be recorded to help those who cannot access the lesson live for whatever reason.

The school day

Learning is currently following the normal school day but this involves a split lesson 3 for Year 9. From Monday January 11th the day will be as follows for all students whether learning at home or in school:

Years 7 and 8	Years 9, 10 and 11
9.10- 10.10 Period 1	9.10- 10.10 Period 1
10.10-11.10 Period 2	10.10-11.10 Period 2
11.10-11.25 Break	11.10-11.25 Break
11.25-12.25 Period 3	11.25-12.25 Period 3
12.25-13.10 Lunch	12.25-13.25 Period 4
13.10-14.10 Period 4	13.25-14.10 Lunch
14.10-15.10 Period 5	14.10-15.10 Period 5

Critical worker and vulnerable students

For those students who are in school could I please ask that you inform school with the normal absence procedures if they will not be in on any day that they are expected in. We still have to maintain accurate attendance records. In its latest guidance the DFE published yesterday, it states:

Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school. If it proves necessary, schools can ask for simple evidence that the parent in question is a critical worker, such as their work ID badge or pay slip. Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

Currently the school buses have been operating but very few children are using them and I would expect these services to be rationalised in the near future. I will update you as soon as I have further information.

Free School Meals

From the week beginning January 18th we have been informed that we can revert to the Edenred vouchers which families will receive on a fortnightly basis to the value of £15 per child per week. Please note that any student who is attending school and entitled to Free School Meals will not receive the voucher because they are provided with lunch in school.

Year 11 and qualifications

We now know that GCSE examinations will not go ahead in the summer – though there is still need for clarification on vocational courses. A consultation will be launched next week by Ofqual regarding the teacher assessment that will happen this summer and how that will be implemented. It really is important therefore that all our Year 11 students continue to engage with their learning and the work set by staff. For any teacher assessment we need the evidence to justify the grades ultimately awarded if they are to be fair. Year 11 were unable to do their Year 10 exams and obviously the mocks planned for next week cannot now go ahead. Once we have further guidance from Ofqual and the Department for Education we will be able to plan how we will proceed but for now – keep on learning Year 11! The knowledge they gain will be really important for courses next year. Education is about what we know and can do not just how we perform in exams and it is that knowledge and set of skills they will need next year.

Year 10 Parents Evening

The Year 10 Parents' Evening will go ahead on January 28th and we have invested in a very straightforward online video system to allow this to happen remotely. I will write separately to the parents and carers of Year 10 early next week with the information you will need.

During these difficult days please stay safe

With best wishes

Andrew Waller
Headteacher