

# Parent/Carer Update 21-4-20

Welcome back to our new virtual summer term, after what has been a very unusual Easter break. I really hope that you managed to take some time out to relax and take stock during the current lockdown. New routines quickly become embedded and things start to feel a little more normal. The good weather has certainly made things more bearable and long may the sunshine continue!



## **Children of Key Workers and Vulnerable Students**

The school continues to be open for students in these two categories. So far, we have seen between four and seven students (from Years 7 and 8) in on any one day – all of whom have been excellent. I would like to say a huge thank you to Cindy Acres and her staff at Westrop School, who were able to accommodate some of our youngsters over Easter, allowing us to have a proper break. We will hopefully be able to reciprocate at some stage!

Although we have a list of students who we have agreed can come into school if necessary, I understand that circumstances can change. Therefore, if your child fits one of those two categories and is now in need of a place, then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

### **School Re-opening**

Despite several stories in the media over the weekend, there is currently no clearly defined route to schools re-opening. However, I think it is sensible to assume that this will not happen during this half-term given the latest government statements, which suggest that any changes in three weeks' time will be marginal rather than major. We remain committed to supporting the youngsters in our care (and by extension you and your families) to ensure that they continue to be happy and can still access appropriate learning,

#### **Home Learning**

Don't forget that we have a dedicated page on the website to keep all messages and documents about Home Learning in one place that I would ask you to refer to. Our plan is to continue to set work via Class Charts at the start of every week and teachers are constantly looking at ways to improve this experience and make it motivating and useful. This week, we are looking at ways to give more context to some lessons (via videos or otherwise), thinking about how feedback will work and to make requirements for sharing completed work with teachers clearer for each task set.

Many of you will have spotted that there are two national initiatives that have been launched this week:

- The Oak National Academy has been set up, providing video lessons and other materials across a range of subjects
- The BBC has massively expanded its online learning materials

Rather than expecting students to access these things in addition to work being set by the school, we are evaluating the content this week and will build it into the tasks that we release where we feel it adds particular value – unsurprisingly, there are teething problems with both.

You may also have picked up that some disadvantaged students will be given laptops and tablets with internet access. However, there are no details of eligibility or how this will work yet. I will pass on the information as soon as I know what is happening.

# **Examination Results (Years 11/10/9)**

More details about the awarding of GCSE and other exam grades this summer have been released. There are no particular surprises – we will be asked to give a professional projected grade, based on all of the information to hand and we will then rank the students in each subject. These grades will then be centrally adjusted based on prior national and school results to give a statistically similar picture to previous years.

#### Some points to note:

- Grades and rankings will be based on the <u>totality</u> of information to hand including mocks, other assessments, class work and homework. No additional information or work is required and we cannot take any outside context into account.
- It has been made very clear to all schools that under no circumstances can the grades or rankings be divulged to students or parents. I would respectfully ask that no requests for this information are made.
- Although there is a consultation currently under way, the strong likelihood is that the same system
  will be used for students in Years 9 and 10 with summer exam entries this is the opposite of
  initial proposals and good news for our early Sociology and English entries.
- Exam results will be issued on the same day as originally planned Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Internet Safety**

Without wanting to give the oxygen of publicity to any particular site, we have been made aware of websites that allow young people to talk and video chat with anonymous strangers. As you would expect, this is not sensible and there have been reports of young people being sexually propositioned or asked for explicit photos within minutes of joining.

If you have any concerns about any online activity you can report it to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOPS), which is an offshoot of the National Crime Agency, at <a href="https://www.ceop.police.uk">www.ceop.police.uk</a>

### **Assembly**

There will be a live-streamed assembly that all students are welcome to attend on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April at 10am (to give some time to cool down after Joe Wicks!) This will also be recorded for those unable to make it.

This will be done using Microsoft Teams, which is available as part of students' normal Office365 login. They can either join the "meeting" via the calendar in Teams or by clicking on the link in the email they will be sent. Please ensure that microphones and cameras are switched off.

I understand some smartphone web browsers might block access. If this is the case then there is a Microsoft Teams app that can be downloaded.

#### **Unknowns**

As we move further into this period of lockdown, we are hopefully managing to slowly answer the many questions that have arisen and adapt appropriately to the new situation. However, there are still some aspects of school life where we really don't yet know what is happening. These include:

- Year 10 Work Experience
- Summer term school trips, residentials and other activities
- New arrangements for the Year 11 Prom and awards ceremony
- Collecting sports kit and other belongings from school

Please bear with us and I promise you will be told as soon as there is anything to know!

# Survey (Years 7-10)

As part of the email that this update is attached to, there is a link to a very quick survey that I would really appreciate you filling in over the next couple of days.

I would like to get a sense of the levels of engagement with home learning, whether we are getting the amount of work set about right and what access to technology our students have.

Thank you in advance for contributing to this.

As ever, I hope that you and your family are safe, happy and well.

Best wishes

Andy Steele

Headteacher