

01 April 2020

Dear Parents / Carers and Pupils,

I write to you at the start of week two of the national school closure and subsequent stay at home guidance imposed by the government to help prevent the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and help save lives. It has been the most peculiar couple of weeks that the majority of us have experienced. The tumultuous announcement on 18 March that schools were to close from 20 March created huge uncertainty followed by the eerie calm and beautiful weather of last week.

The requirement for many to find new ways of working and the global expansion in the use of technology to communicate, hold meetings and undertake our work across all sectors of the economy has been a huge learning curve for many of us. Staff have been working hard in response to the pandemic to produce resources to support students' learning and move it forward. It is very much a transition time for us all in terms of staff setting work and pupils getting used to a schoolwork environment whilst at home. I would like to thank the vast majority of pupils who have completed their work and those who have sent their work for teachers to assess. Staff will continue to plan work up to the Easter holiday, which was due to commence on 09 April, and we will share some more open-ended/voluntary tasks which are more of an optional offer to help stave off boredom during these unprecedented times as a list of resources/website links that pupils can use over Easter. These will appear on both the website and SMHW.

If you have any general enquiries, please use the contact form on the website. This account is monitored throughout the working day.

Of course, in times like this, health and well-being are everybody's first priority but as an educationalist I am concerned about the length of time children will be missing from education. I think it is really important for all pupils, especially for those in Year 10, with terminal exams (GCSEs) next year, to establish a clear work routine early on into this new reality. You are strongly recommended in this 'new normal' situation to set aside time each day to get work done. Don't try to do everything at once and make sure you ask questions via SMHW if you are struggling or need clarification. Parents are reminded that they can access SMHW to help keep track of the work being set and to help to support their child(ren) in getting it done. Parents do need a PIN to set up an account – these have been sent out to many already and can be obtained from school or via the SMHW support pages if required. You will need to bear with us however, if we receive a huge demand for these.

The use of online lessons by video/audio is something that some people have been asking about, however the demand for IT resources, the impact on broadband connections and the various safeguarding considerations mean that this will not be either possible nor advisable. Staff will be able to respond to pupil questions and provide feedback but not necessarily immediately or at the scheduled lesson time.

Our closure on Friday 20 March was a sad and poignant day for all but particularly for pupils in Year 11. We have been promised by Ofqual some detail of what will be used to award this summer's grades for pupils by Easter. Speculation prior to this announcement is not productive and we have been asked to deal only in facts during such uncertain times. We will write to all Year 11 pupils and parents once this guidance is published.

There is a worry for our Year 11 pupils in particular that they have missed out on a vital part of life learning in that they have not undergone an intensive revision period in the build up to final

'I have come that they have life and have it to the full' John 10:10

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examinations, developing synoptic understanding of each subject and developing resilience by dealing with the pressure of daily exams. This could make the transition to Sixth Form more difficult unless they remain in good learning and working habits. The Department for Education have issued the following statement: 'We recognise that some students may feel disappointed that they have not been able to sit their exams. If they do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam, as soon as is reasonably possible after schools and colleges open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.'

With this in mind, we will still set you revision tasks for those elements of the GCSEs which we feel are still pertinent. Completing your course and undertaking revision will also help you develop some of the essential skills and resilience you will need later in life when you are preparing for examinations.

In the last week, the school has been open for a number of people including the children of COVID19 critical key workers who are doing so much to keep the nation well and functioning. I thank all staff who have been in, supporting the children and making them feel welcome, with a varied offer of care, work and leisure activities. This facility will continue to be open, including during the Easter holidays should there be a demand for it, and it is very much about making our small contribution to the national effort. If you are a COVID19 critical key worker who needs to make use of this facility please do not hesitate to contact school; we understand the nature of shift patterns and that it may well not be something that is used every day but it is a facility to help if there are childcare issues.

In these strange times it is easy to lose track of the days and on Thursday 09 April we would have been breaking up for the Easter holiday until 27 April. However, as mentioned above, a range of resources will be linked to the website and SMHW to help pupils broaden their knowledge and explore other areas of interest during the Easter break.

Finally, I encourage you to stay in contact with school through our website. Staff are working from home and are able to respond to enquiries, preferably by ShowMyHomework. We all look forward to a point where we can celebrate re-opening to our pupils and recover some semblance of normal life.

I hope you are all able to stay well and would like to remind us all that we are being asked to



May God Bless you all and all who are associated with our school in any way.
Yours sincerely

Mr. K. Turmeau.

Mr K Turmeau
Headteacher