

25th March 2020

Dear Parents & Carers

Firstly, I hope this letter finds you well.

I do not want to overload you with letters and communication at a time when I know many of you are getting to grips with some very big changes to both family and working life. I do not think any of us could have been prepared for the significant changes in society and our everyday lives that the last five days has brought. I hope you and your family are coping. On the positive side, it has been uplifting to read and hear about examples of outstanding community spirit and support in local neighbourhoods across the country.

In the midst of all of this, I am conscious that some of our own 'normal' school business may seem trivial by comparison, but we will continue to provide updates on some issues as and when we have things to share.

School Opening: on Monday we had 15 students in school, yesterday there were ten and today we only have 4 being looked after. The Government message about staying at home and school being a '*last resort*' has been understood. This means that I have been able to better protect my own staff and a very small rota of senior colleagues is now able to supervise students who meet the criteria. Thank you very much for your support with this.

Free School Meals: if you have ordered these in advance, they are still available to collect at lunchtime from school. We have a hatch at the window to the canteen where they are being collected. You need to make your own decision about whether to take up this offer and consider your personal circumstances, against the advice of staying at home unless absolutely necessary. The offer remains open. I am still involved in ongoing discussions with the Local Authority and the Trust about other longer term solutions to the issue of supplying Free School Meals.

Home Learning: firstly, thank you for your feedback in relation to this and for supporting your child in this learning. I won't pretend I was not anxious about the 'Google Classrooms' working, but by and large it is going very well indeed. We have received feedback that some children felt a little 'swamped' with work at the start of the week and were worried about being unable to complete it all! I think we were worried that the opposite might be true and that you could have bored children on your hands. It is good this is not the case. However, please remember that these are not daily tasks in each subject. In some cases, it is clear that 'chat groups' are popping up and these are optional extras the students can engage in. There is some really creative stuff going on so, in relation to this, please note the following points that we have also shared with staff:

- Year 7, 8 and 9: staff have been asked to set one task per subject, per week in the first instance.
- Years 10-13: staff have been asked to set two tasks per subject per week in the first instance.
- We have asked staff to suggest how long the task should take and whether or not it is a piece that needs to be submitted electronically, or completed on paper.
- Students should not spend any longer than 5 hours each day completing work.
- Not all work set can be marked individually, it would not be feasible.
- If students have any concerns about a piece of work, their first port of call is to email their subject teacher.

Year 11: I will be writing to Year 11 parents/students on Friday with a further update on the process of how GCSE grades will be awarded and how they can best use their time in these next few months. I do not think anyone has the perfect answer to this question, but I will share my thoughts. With a Year 11 child of my own now at home, I can see this dilemma from every viewpoint.

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In the meantime, please ensure that your child is following all the Government guidelines about keeping themselves safe and staying at home. There has been some local concern about young people ignoring the advice on social distancing and meeting up with friends in larger groups. It is so important that we keep reminding them, and ourselves, about the potential dangers of this. We all have a responsibility to each other.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Herbert', written in a cursive style.

David Herbert