

4 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

**Re: COVID-19 Closure Period - Further Information and Updates**

First of all, I genuinely hope this latest correspondence finds you and your respective families well and thank you for your ongoing tremendous support and significant efforts throughout the ongoing closure period. It remains hugely appreciated by my colleagues and I.

I will now provide some further information and relevant updates in addition to my recent communications and for ease of reading, I will provide a headline for each section:

**Summer Examination Grading Process Update** – As a direct result of the highly professional and fully committed efforts of the academy's staff who teach our near 500 Years' 11, 12 and 13 cohorts, we have made tremendous progress on this hugely important task over the past four weeks. Therefore, at this exact point in time, we have completed at least 75% if not 80% of the whole process with a multitude of quality assurance meetings to now follow all aimed at ensuring that from a Plume Academy perspective, we will achieve our objective of only submitting each and every individual grade in as fair and as accurate a manner as possible. I will of course provide further updates prior to as well as at the point of submitting our students final gradings.

**Remote Learning Update** – Again, many thanks indeed for the really positive ongoing input regarding this key aspect of our work. To reiterate, my colleagues and I continue to greatly appreciate your support with this especially in light of the fact that many of you continue to have your own work to do, run your own households and families and sadly, in some cases, recover from illness yourselves or help other family members to do so.

My senior team and I, along with our Faculty and Subject Leaders and their own team members, continue to discuss this on a regular basis and primarily from both an evaluative as well as an evolutionary perspective. The last time we discussed this as a senior leadership team was on Thursday afternoon and by the time you read this letter, we will have discussed this with the academy's middle leadership via an earlier virtual gathering. These discussions will continue to centre on how we set the work, in what regulatory and via which platforms. We also continue to listen to as well as utilise your feedback as well as that of your children and this will only continue whilst we remain closed to the majority of the academy's students. However, and a further polite reminder, please, do not hesitate to make contact with your children's teachers should you feel you need to do so. Many of you are of course doing this, as are your children, and I know there are literally hundreds of interactions occurring between home and my colleagues on a daily basis via the academy's email system. Therefore, if you have not already and you feel you need to do so, please, get in touch with the respective class, subject, faculty or pastoral leader and who I know will be only too happy to assist as best as s/he possibly can.

**Oak National Academy** – In addition to the work being set by the academy's staff, including their own recorded teaching be posted, as you are aware, I have shared with you in recent communications, including <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>, many useful additional learning platforms. However, as many of you will have already seen, the Government invested in and launched another online learning resource recently and that can be accessed via: <https://www.thenational.academy/>. Oak National Academy was created by a group of primary and secondary school teachers to provide a sequenced plan of video lessons and curricular resources for teachers to use as they wish and to complement their existing teaching and planning. The platform is free and if you haven't already done so, please have a look and, if possible, use it like many of our staff and some of you have over the past week or so.

**StarLine** - National Home Learning Support Helpline for Parents and Carers - Following on with the home learning theme, a national parent/carer helpline has now been set up, known as 'StarLine', and backed by the new virtual Oak National Academy, as well as a number of other academy trusts. It is also staffed by Ofsted inspectors who have been redeployed alongside teachers to provide advice about home learning to parents and carers. The helpline is designed to further assist you create regular routines and study habits, offering practical steps to take and access to resources, such as support with a specific topic or advice on how to structure the day, deal with difficult behaviour or manage the learning of several children at once. StarLine can be accessed via: <https://www.starline.org.uk/> and is open six days a week and covers all areas of the curriculum across all phases of education. The number to call is 0330 313 9162 and all calls are charged at local rate.

**Tips for Parents and Carers for looking after yourselves during lockdown** – This will not have been an easy time at all for a significant number of you and I can assure you I remain extremely mindful of this. Therefore, whilst there are many resources out there aimed at providing advice and guidance for you to assist your child(ren) learn at home, please find the link to a particularly useful one from a reputable organisation I found aimed at supporting you: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/parents-tips-for-looking-after-yourself-in-lockdown/>. I know it's easier said than done, however, if you get the chance, please take a few minutes to have a look at this and in an attempt to do something for yourself which I know many of you often don't take the time or feel you get the chance to do.

**Re-opening of the academy** – Further to my recent input and various communications regarding this hugely important matter, to this day, like school leaders as well as business owners across the country, I am still awaiting any form of definitive input from the Government. As you will have undoubtedly heard and seen, despite many recent efforts by the Secretary of State for Education to quell the relentless 'chatter' led by the national press on this matter, after direct input from him earlier today as well as the Prime Minister last Monday, it is now clear they are moving towards an actual announcement as to when this could be later this week. Therefore, when we hear as to what is said in terms of timescales and actual stages (which year groups this will relate to), only then will my senior team and I turn all of our attentions to devising the necessary intricate plans that will be required to even contemplate this. However, as many of you will undoubtedly agree, even if a date is provided, the supporting scientific evidence will need to be beyond doubt, especially in terms of the 'R number' (that key indicator as to how a virus spreads through a population).

This is because whilst it is of course somewhat concerning that our students have missed four working weeks of school thus far, it must be evidently clear that we are in a position to actually re-open before we consider doing so. However, when we do, it will not be anything like 'the norm' and as it was prior to the closure, and what we will be able to plan and implement is highly likely to be greatly reduced as well as somewhat restricted due to the need to continue adhering to social distancing and to ultimately, not put students and staff at risk.

I know some of you will have it in your minds or indeed have already made the decision that no matter what is said by the Government and subsequently put into place by my team and I, you will not be sending your child(ren) back into the academy until the start of the new academic year. However, regardless as to whether this decision has already been made or not, in such times and under such unprecedented circumstances, I will only support and respect each and every parent's/carer's individual input on this specific point.

Finally, we've been on a somewhat unique journey thus far and we obviously have far more of this respective journey ahead of us. However, whilst it has been far from easy, without any shadow of a doubt, your ongoing support, loyalty and continuing efforts have made it a greatly less challenging than it could have been. Therefore, and to reiterate my previous input, thank you very much indeed for this as it remains greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

Yours sincerely

Mr C A Wakefield  
Principal

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