

CWA/KRE/MBE

22 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: COVID-19 Period Update

First of all, I hope this correspondence finds you and your respective families doing as well as possible as we continue to collectively navigate our way through these ever-changing times.

Secondly, I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the following points by way of a COVID-19 period update, and following on from both my own related correspondences as well as those of a number of my colleagues:

Virtual Remote Learning Programme

A genuine and sincere thank you for the significant part you have played in supporting the academy to not only set this up, but also to allow it to positively embed in such a short period of time. This very much includes encouraging your children to join the daily lessons but also, your tremendous and varied assistance willingly provided thus far in allowing us to continually develop and improve this vitally important aspect of our current teaching and learning programme. This will, I know, only bode well moving forward and for multiple reasons including if we ever had to revert back to it due to any future lockdown situation arising – something none of us would like to see of course once we eventually fully progress out of this one, but something we must adequately prepare for nonetheless.

Whilst attendance at both our virtual lessons and assemblies has been hugely positive since this its inception three weeks ago, my colleagues and I remain acutely aware that for some of our students actually partaking in these or even just contemplating doing so can bring about anxiety and associated concerns. Therefore, to reiterate a number of important associated points I have stated throughout the lockdown period and through an array of channels:

- If this proves to be the case for your child, a polite reminder that these **remain non-compulsory**. A further polite reminder that each lesson is recorded and can be viewed/reviewed at a later time or date and there are many other strands of work still being set via Show My Homework, Hegarty Maths, Seneca, academy email and other established platforms. Therefore, should your child wish to use these as an alternative, s/he is more than welcome to do so.
- **Both virtual lessons and all of the work set via the above highlighted platforms does not need to be completed.** I remain aware that some of our students are worried that they will get into trouble for not doing everything set, however, and to reiterate, this will not be the case. My colleagues continue to conduct/set work through all platforms available to us and so as to ensure there will always be work for our students to do should they wish to do so.

- As you are also aware, the academy has remained open to the students of key workers and vulnerable students throughout the lockdown period. From last Monday, we also opened a number of supervised classrooms on a daily basis to all students of Years 10 and 12, as per the latest Government guidance. **However, if you are a parent/carer of a child in Years 7-9** and accessing lessons due to technological factors is an issue, please, do not hesitate to liaise with your child's Head or Assistant Head of Year in the first instance to see how best we can help.

Ongoing Communications with our Families

Throughout the lockdown period, my colleagues and I have felt it extremely important to keep you as up to date as possible with everything of relevance that has been going on in terms of academy-related matters. We realise that at times, especially over the past few weeks, there have been many communications for you to open up and read, and we have remained conscious of the fact that your own lives remain extremely busy as well as somewhat demanding too. However, we continue to feel that keeping you as up to date and as fully-informed as possible remains of the utmost importance and therefore, we will continue to write and send out the necessary communications moving forward so as to ensure we continue to meet this key objective.

Whilst referring to these regular, ongoing communications, the vast majority will always close by offering an open channel to the colleague(s) sending them and with a direct email address through which to ask an associated question or to raise a query. Therefore, please, should you wish to pursue this, it is an open invitation and do not hesitate to do so, however, and as I have stated in communications for quite some time now, should you wish to correspond with the academy, at present the two best routes to do so are via:

- Email with staff email addresses listed on our website via: *the small, white three lines that can be found on the top left of the main page > Parents > Staff Contacts > Full Staff List.*
- Our Mill Road Campus only mainline number of 01621 879803 which has a live contact from 8.30 am – 3.10 pm every week day and the ability to leave a voicemail outside of these times. These are picked up and distributed every week day via the respective receptionist.
 - o **Please note that our Farnbridge Road Campus remains closed and the main number of 01621 854681 is not in operation other than to have a voicemail from me which was updated very recently and providing further direct instructions in terms of how to contact the academy.*

Students Review Days for Years 7-10 and 12 – Thursday 25 June and Wednesday 1 July 2020

I am genuinely delighted that so many of our families have signed up to these already and where a bespoke 15 minute meeting will be held with each of the students and families who do, as well as two members of the academy's staff. However, if you have not signed up as of yet, I ask that you seriously consider doing so as my colleagues and I feel this will provide a good opportunity to engage in some really constructive dialogue between key stakeholders and with our students' subsequent input very much at the heart of this. **The deadline for signing up to these is 3.00 pm tomorrow (Tuesday 23 June 2020) and Ms Everett will send out a reminder letter this morning with the direct link to book an appointment contained within it.**

Please note, however, that to allow us to successfully complete these days, we will **not** be in a position to provide a daily provision at Mill Road Campus for key worker, vulnerable or Years 10 and 12 students on either of these dates. However, the previously planned Staff Training day on **Friday 26 June** will now **not** take place and we will open up our daily Mill Road Campus provision to the aforementioned students instead.

Various Transition Plans, Challenges, Events and Summer Examination Results Days

As you will have seen via multiple communications from various colleagues throughout the lockdown period regarding each of these hugely important highlighted matters, the academy's team of staff continue to work in collaboration on a whole host of transition related work and associated plans. A number of these plans also involve key, detailed work with dozens of feeder primary schools and a whole raft of external agencies. This will continue not only throughout the rest of the summer term but also throughout the course of the traditional summer break so as to ensure the many plans we are devising are fulfilled accordingly.

Further updates, including very detailed ones for some of these, will continue to be provided by those colleagues with delegated responsibilities for each one for the rest of this academic year and beyond if deemed necessary.

The Plan for the Autumn Term

As you will have undoubtedly heard via various press and social media outlets, and as I alluded to at the start of this correspondence, the national picture is ever-changing and my colleagues and I, like you and millions of others across the nation, continue to do our best to keep up and feed into our working plans anything that proves relevant or indeed, statutory. Therefore, and as I wrote to the academy's staff on Friday afternoon, with the next academic year very much in mind, we continue to discuss this matter as a key priority at our full Senior Leadership Team meetings.

Again, as announced by the Secretary of State for Education last week, a £1 billion fund to support the concept of 'catch-up' has been assigned to schools, however, we have no specific details for this as of yet. We have been told this will follow, however, very disappointingly, we were also informed on Friday afternoon that our previously assigned 'Year 7 Catch-Up Premium' which all state secondary schools receive every year to support new students who require support with their literacy and numeracy in Year 7 has now been discontinued – this was without notice and will mean a loss of over £25K from next year's budget at a time when those funds had been carefully and methodically assigned.

We also have no specific details regarding as to what the Government expects from schools come September other than the verbal input from both the Prime Minister as well as the Secretary of State for Education that they want all children in for five days a week and full-time. They have said the specific 'details' relating to 'how' we can do this will be with us at some point in the next two weeks, however, in the ongoing spirit of honest and open communication and as I said to the academy's team of staff on Friday afternoon, this is just one strand of what we are continuing to plan for in terms of the start of the autumn term. As has been the case throughout the lockdown period though, what I will also clarify at this point is that we will only develop these plans based on solid, definitive and high-quality guidance and evidence that continues to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, families and of course our staff, remains our number one priority.

In an ideal world, as I'm sure the vast majority of you will agree, it would see the academy start September in as normal a fashion as possible, with virtually all students and staff back working alongside each other. However, we are also looking at some potential rota programmes as comparable alternatives just in case we are advised against this by either the Government, any associated scientific organisation, the key data relating to the UK's COVID-19 Alert Level (which as we know has now been downgraded from four to three categorising the epidemic as being in "general circulation" and allowing social distancing to be relaxed), the R Number, national trends, the progress of bedding in the national track and trace system and the expected decision later this week on the national social distancing protocols. Still, I will continue to keep you updated in terms of what we receive and how this affects our future autumn term plans moving forward.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to read this further detailed correspondence as well as for your ongoing support through a number of academy-related channels. It continues to make all the difference and when I share positive input with my colleagues from those of you who take the time to write in, the positive impact is significant and genuinely fantastic to see. However, our channels of communication remain open for input that is pertinent to each and every one of our families and if ever received, I can assure you it will only ever be viewed and treated with the due courtesy and respect it deserves.

Yours sincerely



Mr C A Wakefield
Principal

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