

11th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing again to update you with key information now we have had time to absorb the Prime Minister's statement on Monday and the Education Secretary's statement on Wednesday. As announced by the PM all schools are now closed until February Half Term in order to help stop the spread of Coronavirus again.

School provision for specific groups

Any student **in any year group** that is classified as vulnerable or has an EHC plan can be in school if a joint decision between the school, parents and any other outside agencies wish this to occur. We will continue to contact parents and encourage school attendance but this is not compulsory and in many cases it may be better for students to 'stay home' and help stop the spread of Coronavirus.

Parents who are keyworkers and would like their child to attend school should telephone the main school office or email post@wexham.slough.sch.uk providing evidence of employment. As reported nationwide there is a substantial increase in keyworker children in school and this is also the case at Wexham. This is due to the considerable expansion of who qualifies for keyworker status. Concern has been expressed by scientists and medical experts that such numbers in schools will not have the same impact as the lockdown last March. It is important we remember that schools have sadly closed in order to help stop the spread of a highly contagious virus. The government's message is now clear that we should all 'stay home'. Therefore keyworkers who are working from home or where another parent/adult is in the house please bear in mind the guidance and the highly difficult position the country is in and keep your child at home where possible to ensure the keyworker provision is available for parents and students which genuinely need this.

Students attending school will be supervised to complete the same remote learning as students at home.

Cancellation of Advanced Level and GCSE Examinations

The Government announced on Wednesday that formal examinations for GCSE and A Level have been cancelled this summer. Some BTEC exams have continued, but this has been at the discretion of each school following risk assessments based on the type of exam and numbers of students involved. Final grades for GCSE, A Level and BTECs will be made using teacher assessment. This is likely to include evidence of work completed prior to this lockdown, during lockdown and when school reopens. Many of our students have worked consistently through last term, whether in school or whilst isolating at home, to ensure that they are already in a strong position.

It is essential that students in Years 11 and 13 continue to work remotely because the collection of work to arrive at a teacher grade has not yet been completed. We are still waiting to hear from examination awarding bodies exactly how final grades are to be reached. If students have not completed work set during lockdown they will clearly be putting themselves at a disadvantage.

Remote Learning

The Government expects schools to provide a minimum of five hours remote learning each day for each student. They explain that schools should: *have a digital platform and should provide at least some of their remote provision via video lessons – this can be done by school-led videos or using other providers like Oak National Academy*. There is no expectation that schools will provide live lessons for students as they recognise this is not feasible for all schools and students. The remote learning we are setting for students includes video lessons, some of which are recorded by our staff and some are using other providers. Schools in Slough have very

different contexts, many are doing exactly the same as us which fully meets DFE expectations. Thank you to all parents for your understanding, these are challenging times for all families. I also very much appreciate the positive feedback we have had from many parents on our provision at the current time but this will evolve to be even better.

The work for students to complete online includes some work that students do to deepen their learning and understanding and some assessment tasks. The assessment tasks need to be completed and returned to the teacher for marking and feedback. At present this is done via the 'hand in' function on Show My Homework. We wish to improve this aspect of our remote learning provision and recognise that student email is often more straightforward and responses from staff more focused when this is used. We are now able to support student email and a guide to accessing student email and the basic use of email will be sent to students soon.

Live Lessons

Whilst there is not an expectation that schools will run live lessons we recognise that, as part of our remote provision, they do have a place and a value. We also recognise that many students will not be able to access live lessons due to shared devices in the household, broadband limitations and other demands on their time such as caring for/supporting younger siblings. It is not our intention to run full time live lessons as our remote learning provision rather we intend to provide some live lessons each week to supplement all our other valuable remote learning resources. All of these lessons will be recorded and made available via Show My Homework for students to watch when it is convenient for them if they are unable to attend them live.

Following the ransomware attack on our network we have been working incredibly hard to re-build it, essentially from scratch. This has been a long and challenging process conducted by external expertise. We are only now in a position to create the safe, structured learning environment on the network that will allow us to deliver live lessons. We expect to be able to begin some small steps with live lessons from Monday 18th January. If your child wishes to be involved they will need to have accessed and regularly check their school email as we will send information through email on how to access Microsoft Teams and the invitations to the lessons. Please be patient with us and understand that as this is new to you, it is also new to us. We will not be able to offer lessons to every year group from the first day but we will be building the provision and offering a few lessons to each year group within the first few weeks of operation.

I would like to stress that this is not intended to replace the remote learning we are providing and that students must continue to access this via Show My Homework. They will be able to submit completed assessment work and ask questions of their teachers via email and will also receive feedback.

Free School Meal Provision

The DFE have now announced a voucher scheme will soon be in place for those parents in receipt of Free School Meals. As soon as this is available we will ensure vouchers are processed and distributed.

Testing

Please continue to return consent forms, even if you refuse consent, when your child returns to school. This is particularly important for those students in attendance at school as we would like to start testing them as soon as possible. A reminder that testing is optional.

Please keep safe and well and look after each other during this extremely difficult time and I will update you if and when there are new announcements.

Yours sincerely



Mr Lawrence Smith
Headteacher