



5 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Update COVID-19

I writing to explain some of the challenges school is facing regarding assessment, reporting and our planning for school reopening. In addition, I want to clarify our view of schoolwork for "catch-up" week" which I know some parents/carers are becoming concerned about.

1. Assessment and Reports

At a meeting of the Governors' Quality of Education Committee meeting held yesterday evening, I outlined the challenges of assessment by year group and linked to this, the difficulties of reporting assessment data to parents and carers. It is very difficult to quantify school performance in the context of living with a pandemic and the effects of national lockdowns. Since March 2020 there have been different models for the delivery of education with a greater emphasis on Remote Learning. There has been and remains, great disparity across our school community between access to IT devices and the internet; engagement and accessibility; understanding and motivation – any attempt to quantify this into school performance data is problematic. All pupils have faced challenges of living with COVID-19 with many being at a disadvantage to others either through food poverty, home heating poverty, lack of or no access to IT provision (even though laptops may have been provided to pupils, the family use of the internet and family commitments has impacted on usage), mental health issues and variable levels of support.

I appreciate there will be pupils and students feeling anxious about the work they have completed and how this will be assessed and whether they will be "judged" on this. I wish to reassure our pupils, students and their parents/carers, that any assessment made of work completed since 4 January 2021, will contribute to any review of standards reached by individual pupils – it will not be a final grade.

I have met with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Faculty Leaders and our Senior Leader Achievement and discussed how best to assess 1. the engagement of pupils in remote learning and 2. the criteria and method to be used when assessing any work produced. It is only right that work pupils and students have produced is marked and assessed but we do not want to penalise further those pupils and students who have genuine struggles with living through these challenging times.

Therefore, we are still in a phase of consultation and discussion on how best to produce summary reports with grades for work and Attitude to Learning that considers the complexities outlined above.

2. Catch up week

On 22 January 2021, I wrote "the whole of the week commencing 8 February 2021 to Friday 12 February 2021 inclusive is to be used as a "catch up / review of work" week, so no new lesson content is to be published on Microsoft Teams; it is to be a week of using lesson time to finish off, improve, review and reflect on work covered since 5 January 2021."

The reason for this is to support families with home schooling and attempt to reduce pressures at home and support pupils and students with their mental health and wellbeing. We know, working remotely and sometimes in isolation, pupils and students are feeling anxious about not being able to always keep up with the pace of lessons and the amount of work they feel they are expected to do. Dedicating

next week as a "catch up week" we want to provide everyone in our school community with the opportunity to either:

1. Finish off pieces of work in subjects they feel they need to catch up with
2. Spend time on pieces of work that is regarded as consolidating learning e.g. producing a mind map or poster to show what they understand what has been covered since 5 January 2021 and can be used for revision later
3. For those who feel they want to do more we encourage the use of Oak National Academy or BBC Bitesize or further self-study and reading around topics in each subject

This will be the case for all pupils and students whether they are in school or working remotely at home, no pupil or student should be saying they have done everything and have nothing to do – we all know, there is always something to do.

3. School reopening

The Prime Minister made another announcement earlier this week that any return to school from 8 March 2021 would be notified to schools after the half-term break. The latest guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) states:

"In the week commencing 22 February, the Government will publish a plan for taking the country out of lockdown. Our aim will be to set out a gradual and phased approach towards easing the restrictions in a sustainable way, guided by the principles we have observed throughout the pandemic, beginning with the most important principle of all: that re-opening schools must be our national priority. We have committed to providing schools, parents and young people with a minimum of two weeks' notice for this return to on-site provision. Additional pupils and students will therefore return to on-site education on 8 March 2021 at the earliest."

Our intention is to continue with remote learning after the half-term break but to do this in two-week blocks until we receive the notification on what basis schools are to reopen from 8 March 2021. We will also remain open after half-term for vulnerable and children of critical (key) workers in accordance with the national guidance – "Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can."

Once again, I hope this letter provides clarification and is helpful as we continue to work within the challenges of living with a pandemic. As always, as I receive further information or changes to advice and guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) I will let you know. Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Ian Morrel
Headteacher