



*'We value the power of education to change lives.'*

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

## **Re: Off-Site Learning and other matters**

This morning we launched our off-site learning programme based on daily timetables of 'lessons' for each Year Group. For the majority of students this week those lessons are their opportunity to spend one hour doing the work set by their teachers, plus the other extension work set. The Parent and Student Guides indicate clearly how many hours of learning students in each year group should be doing as a minimum each day, preferably from 9am onwards rather than in the evening/late at night. The routine of getting up and ready for learning starting at 9am then sticking to that timetable, rather than losing all sense of structure, is important for supporting your son or daughter's emotional and mental health as well as vital to keep them educationally productive. We appreciate they may not agree and might prefer to stay in bed all morning – and we are very grateful for the commitment you are making to keep them adhering to this structured day.

### **Year 11 and Year 13**

Naturally, some students in Year 13 and Year 11 are querying whether there is any need to continue learning and some may be feeling disheartened. It is **absolutely essential that Year 11 and Year 13 keeping studying and learning**, doing coursework assignments, practice exam questions, work set by staff and their own revision. Work completed from 23<sup>rd</sup> March onwards and, in due course, uploaded for teachers to review, will be used to help build the overall evidence base for teacher assessment of the most likely grade each student would have achieved overall at the end of the course.

Naturally students and parents in Year 11 and 13 are concerned about how the alternative process for teacher-assessing a grade will work. At the moment, there is no further government guidance to teachers apart from the announcements you may also have heard in the media. Once this guidance has been received, we will share with you what the process is. Whatever the process is, teaching staff will apply it fairly and consistently to each student and, unless the government advise us differently, it will be based on the standard of work produced by each student during the course so far and their work done between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and the date of the final assessment; as indicators of the most likely final overall grade. In the coming days and weeks, teachers will indicate which practice exam questions or mock papers they want students to upload back to them to help with generating additional evidence. Every BTEC assignment and coursework assignment, for those students taking courses which involve them, will need to be completed by them at home to the highest possible standard and uploaded.

The government indicate at present there will be some form of retrospective appeal process linked to an opportunity to sit actual exams in the Autumn. We sympathise with concerned parents wanting the best for their child and we know how important these grades are to our students' futures. Therefore, emailing or otherwise contacting staff seeking personal assurances their child 'will be looked after' or reminding staff how important these grades are is not necessary and indeed risks being perceived as an attempt to influence the outcome. I have asked my teaching staff not to respond to any such contact from parents and to report any concerns they have about parents who, even with the best of intentions, are perceived to be applying pressure to staff regarding awarding certain grades.

Hopefully the government may implement a process indicating a provisional grade and offering students the opportunity to submit additional work certified as their own indicating they are working consistently at a higher grade than this, but we need to wait and see if this is included in the government plan.

### **Year 12 and Year 10**

At present the government have published no special arrangements for students in these Year Groups, although they may do so in future, and so anywhere up to the whole term of their GCSE, A Level and BTEC courses may have to be learnt off-site. Therefore, it is essential students in these year groups adhere to the routines of their new timetables, complete all the work set on time and to the highest standard they can. At present our off-site learning is focused on consolidating learning so far and (for Year 10) finishing off the mock exams. We will be putting in place programmes of study to introduce new topics and units from after Easter.

### **For all Students and Parents Years 7 to 13**

We appreciate that learning at home, without a teacher present to supervise, explain and offer assistance, is challenging. Parents – we are incredibly grateful for any support and encouragement you can give in our absence. Subject-specific support is available through the expanded MyHelp online service and you are encouraged to make as much use of this as you need. As this interruption to learning at school is likely to go on for months it is important students in Years 7 to 9, in addition to those in Years 10 to 13, focus on adhering to the daily routines and keeping up with the study programmes being published to them by teachers – they too will move on to new topics and units after Easter.

As we move forward, we will develop and refine our off-site education based on experience. In particular we will look at identifying and implementing the most straightforward methods for students to upload key assignments done by hand as well as typed-up, and for marking of work and feedback by staff. We are also looking at developing tools for tracking student activity on our systems and sharing information with Heads of Achievement, Pastoral Leads and Learning Support so we can contact parents about students experiencing difficulty keeping up with the schedule. In addition, as staff expertise develops, we aim to begin holding a range of more interactive lessons, feedback and questions and answers sessions for students.

Our pastoral and learning support staff are maintaining contact with the students they are responsible for to support their welfare and learning. We are running education and activities in school for a small group of Key Worker students. Vouchers have been distributed to all those entitled to Free School Meals covering the next four weeks.

Hopefully you have found this update useful for keeping you all aware of the overall picture and in terms of the implications for your own son or daughter. We are not able to answer every question or anticipate every issue, although we are working hard to provide the best experience possible in the circumstances. Please be assured that whenever we learn more from the government regarding GCSE and A Level exams, or off-site learning, or how long this period of closure is likely to last, we will update you too.

With warmest regards and gratitude for your support and patience.



**Patrick Earnshaw**  
Headteacher