

25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Families,

**Re: COVID-19 Lockdown Update**

I hope you are all well and managed to have some fun in the snow on Sunday! It has been quite an eventful couple of weeks in education, so I am writing to keep you abreast of everything you need to know.

**Reopening of school to all students possibly delayed**

The Sunday Times reported yesterday that it is likely schools will not reopen until Easter and claims that Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary will be making an announcement at some point this week to confirm this. At the time of writing this letter, I understand that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has been asked to confirm a date or a plan on how schools will reopen but he has not given an indication of what this will look like yet.

For now, as a school, we will continue to focus on our remote learning provision and continue to develop what we are doing. If remote learning is to continue beyond February half term, we want to make sure that we are doing everything we possibly can for our students to make their learning experience the best it can be while we are working online. Your views are very important so we will be sending a remote learning survey out soon (details below).

**Remote Learning Survey**

We have received an overwhelming number of positive comments from families about our remote learning provision which we are very grateful for and I would like to thank everybody who has taken the time to share their kindness – each time we receive positive comments it gives us such a boost! As mentioned above, it seems that we will be continuing with remote learning for a while yet so as we are halfway through the first half term and after speaking to lots of families, students and staff, we have decided that it would be a good time to review our experiences over the last 3 weeks.

A survey will be sent out shortly for students, parents/carers and staff to complete as we would like to gain an overview of what each of our stakeholders think of our provision so far and what we can do to improve it further.

We particularly want to focus on mental health and wellbeing and the screen time both students and staff are finding themselves using each day. In addition, we have had students of all different abilities, needs and year groups mention to us that they are finding it difficult to keep on top of all the work that they are being given – some working until 11pm to finish everything – so we want to see what we can do to adapt practice as it is not sustainable for our children to be working these long hours.

It may be that we find it is only the students who have mentioned it to us who are working these long hours or finding it difficult to keep up so we will work with them individually. However, if this is something that students and families are finding across the board, we want to acknowledge that and act so that our students do not suffer from burnout. More information on ideas will be found in the survey. I know that we have sent quite a few surveys in recent weeks but it is so incredibly important that we obtain the information we are asking for as it enables us to improve what we are doing as a school. We would really appreciate it if as many students and families could complete it and thank you in advance for doing so!

**Laptop Scheme Survey Responses**

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey we sent out to indicate whether you would be interested in a laptop scheme. About 160 families said that they would be interested in the scheme so Mr Dearlove, our Head of Online Learning is going to start the process with FreedomTech, the



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company that the scheme would be through. Once we have had the necessary discussions with them, we will inform interested families of the details.

### **Mass Testing at School**

In my letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, I informed families that I was going to be speaking to someone from the Department for Education about the mass testing programme. I am afraid to say after speaking with the Head of Delivery for the West Midlands, no answers to my questions about accuracy were answered. Even though I was promised answers towards the end of that week/beginning of the following week, I waited until Friday of the following week and still received no response.

However, my own reading and judgement on the low accuracy rates of the tests in identifying positive cases and the possible dangers it could put the school and Newport community in must have been right as last week, the government paused the testing programme to allow students who had been in close contact with someone tested positive for COVID-19 to be back in school if their families gave consent. This has been a huge relief to me as you can imagine!

The government would still like schools to carry out routine testing of students and staff twice a week (if consent is given) and I will be meeting with Governors next week to discuss this. There are still questions that have not been answered but I think I have come to the conclusion that I am probably not going to receive them.

### **Year 11**

Mrs Mahon sent a letter on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to inform year 11 families of the Ofqual consultation regarding examinations. I would urge all year 11 families and students to read Mrs Mahon's letter and respond to the consultation. The deadline is this Friday (29<sup>th</sup> January 2021).

### **Tutor time (CLL)**

I would be grateful if you could encourage your child to attend their CLL sessions particularly on a Monday and Thursday. On Mondays, important notices are given out and on Thursday, teachers deliver extremely important Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lessons that are vital for our students.

### **Lockdown Clubs and BBS Community Events**

I would like to say a huge well done to every single student who participated in the Great Burton Borough School Bake Off! Your cakes looked absolutely delicious! Congratulations to Finlay Wright who won the competition with his beautiful cake, Heidi Wright who was in second place, and Celeste Yap and Jezebella Donahoe who came joint third. What talented students we have!

However, everybody has different gifts and talents, so if baking isn't for you, I am very excited to see all of your entries for the Photography competition (deadline 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021) and the various sporting challenges that the PE department has organised.

I was certainly not disappointed either with the Science Lockdown Club gummy bear experiment. Those Godzilla zombie gummy bears were frightening! Thank you to students for sharing your photos of the experiments and saying that you never want to eat Haribo sweets again!

I hope you enjoy the rest of the week!

Best wishes and stay safe,



Krissi Carter  
Principal



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