



12 May 2020

Dear Students, Parents, Carers and Guardians

I am sure that many of you will have watched the briefing given by Boris Johnson in which he provided an outline plan about how the current lockdown restrictions may be eased over the coming weeks and months. I am sure that much more detail will become available soon but I know that all of you will be very keen to find out what this means for the opening of schools.

For secondary schools it looks as though the current temporary closure will continue for some time to come. There is a possibility that Year 10 and Year 12 students may return for some contact with staff before the summer holidays but it is unlikely that students in Year 7, 8 and 9 will return this academic year. The Government has said that their decisions will be kept under review so it is possible that there will be changes to their plans for reopening schools. The Government has written guidance for parents about the school closures which can be found by following this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

So in the meantime we will continue to operate our home learning programme that has been running since we closed in March. We have been refining our approach to home learning over the last few weeks. For example, we have more teachers delivering lessons that have been recorded with voice overs which has meant that we can deliver new content more effectively. We have also been using Google forms to submit work to teachers which has helped students get feedback more effectively. It has been a fast learning curve for teachers, students and parents as we have moved to online learning but overall I am pleased with how things are progressing. We know that some families have struggled to access the online materials so we are in the process of producing some help videos that we will publish on our website when they are ready. If you don't know how to access the google classroom these videos will help.

There are still challenges for some families who do not have access to a laptop or PC. It is very difficult to access online learning through a device that does not have a proper keyboard so we are trying to find ways of loaning out or purchasing equipment to resolve this problem. You may have heard the recent Government announcement that all Year 10 disadvantaged students and students with social workers will be given a device from the Government. As often with such claims it has not proved to be quite as promised and although we will receive some laptops and tablets from the Government, it won't be enough for all who need one and we still don't know when they will arrive.

As you know the Academy is currently open for a very limited number of students who are vulnerable or their parents are in the defined list of key workers. Since the announcement from the Government yesterday we have had a number of enquiries from parents asking if their children can return to school. This is not possible as the provision that we have open is very limited and remains only for key worker children and vulnerable children. The key message is still that the safest place for children to be is at home.

I'd like to thank you again for your continued support of the Academy. As I have said before we have never had to work this way before. Schools are places where hundreds of human face to face interactions go on in every hour of every day. Working remotely at home is not normal for students and staff and it is taking time to adjust. Some students are finding it difficult coping with the new way of working so please remember that if you are at all worried about your child then please contact the form tutor in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

Jim Parker
Principal

