

5 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carer,

With the Prime Minister having addressed the nation last night, mentioning the lockdown and the implications for schools, you were no doubt expecting yet another update from me!

The main points you need to be aware of now are:

- School sites are now closed to all pupils except children except those with defined circumstances dictating that they must be in school, or children of critical workers. We ask that all of our school community do their best to comply in full with the new guidelines, in order to halt what has been a worrying rise in cases locally and nationally.
- The Academy is providing remote learning via Firefly and Microsoft Teams for all lessons on a student's timetable. Every morning, students will be asked to attend a virtual tutor time, in order to check in and ensure all is well. Due to the number of users simultaneously using Firefly, the system has become temperamental at times. We have spoken numerous times with the support team at Firefly, and at the time of writing are confident the issues can be resolved quickly. In the meantime, the content previously on Firefly is transferred to Microsoft Teams. User guides for both systems are on the Academy website. As a parent myself, I understand the difficulties in assisting children with remote learning, and I do sympathise with those of you who have expressed your displeasure with the situation in general and Firefly in particular. I would ask that if you have particular issues that you contact the school directly, as we are unable to answer individual queries on social media.
- The Lateral Flow Testing arrangements which I wrote to you about over Christmas have been largely postponed; we are likely to resume this large-scale testing when the majority of pupils are allowed to return to school. This is currently assumed to be around February Half Term. The exception to this will be for those students who attend the provision that we currently offer. We will write to those families with more details in the coming days.
- We were informed last night that GCSE exams for Year 11 pupils and A-level exams for Year 13 students are unlikely to take place in the usual format; we are awaiting clarification from the DfE on how exactly children will be assessed. Exams for vocational qualifications (BTECs and Level 3 Extended Certificates) are still expected to happen, including those in the next few weeks. Those students affected by examination changes will receive a separate letter with further details.

Thank you for your patience and forbearance on these matters. It continues to be a time of great uncertainty for all concerned.

We will of course update you again when we have more information.

Kind regards.



Mr D Bird  
Headteacher