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3 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you with our weekly update on what has been happening around our schools and looking ahead to the next few weeks. Today we had expected that all our students would be on the first day of their Easter holidays. Clearly things are very different now but we would encourage most parents and students to try to think about the next 2 weeks as a school holiday if they possibly can. Our online work portals remain accessible, but we encourage all students to focus on having a break over this period.

Of course, our schools will not actually close. We will remain open for the young people who need us so that their parents can go to work as key workers in the national fight against Coronavirus. We are happy to do this and when we asked for staff to volunteer to come in we had far more volunteers than we needed. I am enormously grateful for everything our staff have done and continue to do to keep this vital provision going. Over the last 2 weeks, by keeping our schools open, well over 500 key workers' shifts have taken place, something we are proud to have helped happen.

Over the last 2 weeks we have been thinking hard and planning for how we can continue to support pupils/students to study from home and provide a structure for work over the next several weeks. You will start to see some changes in the type of work and how work is set. We will move to a structure of two week blocks of time and work for every year group will continue to appear in dated folders with a clear set of instructions for students and parents. Up to this point, most of the work we have set has been consolidation, practice or revision of things students have already been taught. After the Easter break, in the first 2 week block (20 April to 1 May), the work set for Year 10 and Year 12 students will be new curriculum content for them to learn and they will be asked to complete one key piece of work to be sent back to a teacher for review. From 4 May, all year groups will then follow this pattern until such a time as schools re-open. Attached to this letter are more details on how this will work.

We continue to recognise that students cannot produce the same type or volume of work that they would have done had they been in school. When students return, we will go back over content they have done at home to ensure we plug any gaps in knowledge and we will catch students back up to where they need to be. For students taking exams in 2021, there is recognition nationally that this period has disrupted their learning and we expect exam boards to make allowances for this in awarding grades next summer. For parents of Year 13 and Year 11 students, we have just received further information from Ofqual, the exams regulator, on how grades will be awarded this summer. You will receive a separate email with a copy of a letter Ofqual have provided for parents and students.

Over the last few weeks we have been ensuring that all students who are entitled to free school meals continue to receive the support they need while not in school. We have now set up our own supermarket voucher scheme in all our schools while we were waiting for the government to act. We have taken the decision to continue providing vouchers through the Easter holiday and all



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parents who are entitled to this support will receive further information about how you will receive these vouchers. We are conscious that many families are facing new financial challenges and changes to their personal circumstances. If you find your circumstances have changed you may now be eligible for free school meals. More information is on our schools' social media channels.

You will be aware that our schools have been trying to do more for the national effort against the Coronavirus than only staying open for particular students. We are incredibly grateful to all our NHS staff and want to show our support by making a very difficult situation a little easier. Yesterday we launched an appeal to provide care packages for NHS staff and we are seeking donations of toiletries such as shampoo, shower gel, lip balm, face and hand moisturiser, toothpaste etc. It would also be nice to provide some other things like tea bags, chocolate, biscuits and so on.

We are doing this because we know of lots of hospital staff who, as well as working long shifts in incredibly difficult circumstances, are either having to shower before and after work to prevent the spread of COVID -19 to patients and family members or working away from home and staying in the hospitals or hotels with limited access to toiletries. If you are able to help, you will have received a letter already or will do so today with more details of the items we need and where and how they can be dropped off while adhering to the government guidelines on leaving your house.

The next few weeks will, of course, be enormously difficult. All schools have effectively been repurposed as part of the fight against Coronavirus and learning and the curriculum has to be organised very differently for children and young people who are at home. We cannot simply take everything that normally happens in schools, transplant it at home and expect parents to become teachers and all children and young people to become expert independent learners. Nor is it sensible for us to expect teachers to be able to do everything they normally do when they are in school surrounded by the young people they teach and the colleagues they normally work with.

We are working very hard to do our best and we have been really grateful for feedback from parents, both the supportive, kind comments and some really helpful thoughts on what is working and what isn't. We continue to welcome your views and ideas and are always happy to answer any questions or concerns you have. The last week has certainly been an eye-opener for me, doing some homeworking alongside my Year 9 daughter who has just got stuck on something in her chemistry homework that I couldn't even pronounce! I have even more sympathy than ever for the competing challenges of childcare, home life, home-working, part-time tutoring, all alongside the worries we all have about health and loved ones. We really are all in this together!

I will write to you again when the new term begins and wish you and your families all the very best.

Jonny Uttley  
CEO



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## Parent Information for Summer Term Online Work

### What are the changes?

After the Easter break, teachers of all subjects will be planning and setting work that covers a two week block. The work set by teachers will no longer be consolidation or revision for work already started prior to school closures. It will now cover new content, with a key piece of work for your child to complete and return to their teachers for feedback.

### When do the changes start?

We will begin with new curriculum content for Years 10 and 12, starting with a 2 week block from 20th April to 1st May.

### What if my child isn't in Years 10 or 12?

All other year groups will continue to have new work set on the online platform during this time period with a focus on consolidation. All other year groups will follow with new curriculum content from 4th May.

### How will my child know what work to select?

All work will continue to appear via the online platform in dated folders. If your child requires a printed work pack, we will be providing them for students without internet access.

### How can I support my child to complete the work if the content is new to them?

All folders will have a clear instruction sheet for parents and students. Please remember if instructions are not clear then you can contact us for help using the subject support emails. We have been taking feedback from parents on what is working well and what we might improve.

We are aiming not just to improve the online work continually, but also to share parents' and students' good ideas for what is working. We welcome feedback on any interesting activities you may have found, in order to capture that we have set up a Google Doc to enable you to give feedback and share your good ideas.



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