



05 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

This week there has been very little news from central government on the next steps we can expect in education. There has been lots of speculation but no concrete direction. We are not really expecting any further developments until the 22nd February when we expect a) news on the consultation on GCSE and A level processes for this summer and b) some movement on if/when students will be returning to school and what this might look like in reality. Until then there is no point second guessing what might happen and therefore our continued focus is on working hard with you to ensure that your children are still actively engaging well with remote learning provision. We know that this term has been very difficult for some families and we want to ensure that everyone who needs support has had the right input from us. Please don't be strangers if you need something – we all need help from time to time and we have staff who are here for you and your children every day of the week.

Please note that from 8th February we are supporting more children in school who are struggling to access learning at home. This means that there will now be three teaching staff in every day who will not be teaching live lessons to their groups because they are supporting in the key worker/vulnerable children rooms and cannot do both. They will of course still post lessons so nobody loses out on learning time.

Please note that next week (w/b 8th February) period 5 is the lesson that KS3 students have to catch up on independent learning tasks that they have fallen behind with and need more time to complete.

Belonging

Those of you who are familiar with the guiding principles of our trust will know that the first principle we work hard to achieve daily is the feelings of self-worth for all in our learning community. One of the key factors that helps us to have positive self-worth is a feeling of belonging. Lockdown has made many people feel a loss of that crucial sense of belonging. This is why we would like you to encourage your children to join in live lessons, attend weekly assemblies and meet up with their friends in mentor time. In the student survey we have just analysed (filled in by 501 students which is amazing) so many of them mentioned that their biggest sadness was that they were unable to see their friends at school. This need for social contact is one of the things that makes us human. We have also decided to get the Y11 hoodies ordered early so that students can have them whilst we are still at school. Feeling part of your year group and knowing that everyone is going through the same anxieties is so important for their wellbeing.

If your child is ill

If your child is ill and cannot engage in their learning can you please let your child's mentor and head of year know so that we don't chase their attendance. May we apologise for technical issues that have meant some parents have received messages regarding their child not attending learning in error.

Supporting our community

We are so pleased to now be in partnership with the Park Road mosque and today have delivered another consignment of donated food parcels to families who need support at these difficult times.

The leaders of the Mosque would like to remind you all that they are open on Thursdays between 10 and 12.30 for members of the community to go and get food parcels for their families. Their message to us has been "don't be a stranger ... we all need help from others at times in our lives".



Parent Voice

As you will all be aware we have been asking you to tell us honestly how the last few weeks have been going for your children learning at home. We are so grateful for the huge number of responses to the parent voice as we recognise that this is a new and (sometimes) difficult situation for all of us.

We value the partnership we have as a community and therefore we want to have the opportunity to explain some of our processes as well as highlighting who you can contact if they need help? To enable this we are going to hold a Google Meet next Tuesday (9th February) between 5.30 and 6.00 p.m. for parents where we will share with you some of our thoughts and take questions. The link to the meeting is <https://meet.google.com/hbw-uziz-rum>.

FSM

The government have directed that there will be provision for FSM over the half term break. This money will be coming from the winter grant that local authorities have been given but, as with Christmas, it again will be administered by us. We have already ordered the vouchers (£15 per child) and they will be with you ready for the holiday.

Please note that schools are not required to stay open at half term so we will close on Friday 12th February and re-open for key worker/vulnerable children only on Monday 22nd February

What has been happening this term – focus on sixth form

A level law students get to see what it's like to work in a law firm

Our five A level law students have taken up a great opportunity to join in a virtual programme with international law firm Taylor Vinters <https://www.taylorvinters.com/>

The virtual sessions, which run for 4 weeks, bring an exciting opportunity for Yr 12s who may consider their future careers in the industry.

The students have been meeting employees from different departments within the firm, talking about their job role and how they got to where they are today. This programme is intended to inspire young people and to give them information into the different career paths within a law firm.

The workshops also help students to develop important soft skills for the world of work, such as communication, teamwork and critical thinking. Students work on case studies that they've been given each week. These will be assessed by a team of experts and a winning team will be chosen and announced at the end of the programme. All fingers crossed for our team.

We wanted to thank the team at Taylor Vinters for giving our students such a wonderful experience.

Y11 interviews for sixth form 2021-22

In my meeting with Mrs Berry this week we discussed the interviews we are conducting for next year's Y12 cohort. We have been very proud of the maturity with which the Y11s have approached these interviews and Mrs Berry said that "it was such a joy to spend quality time talking to such articulate and motivated young people". It was also fantastic to welcome Mrs Hanson back for a KIT day. Interviews continue over the next two Thursdays.

A level students show off their baking skills

One of the things we have been trying to do is to carry on with the experiences that would have happened if we'd been in school. Usually we would do a GBBO style challenge with our sixth formers. The fact that we are not in school did not deter us and here are a few pictures of the creations that they made and shared with us. I am sure you will agree that we have some talented bakers in our midst. Prizes for the best cake will have been awarded by the time you get this letter.



What are we looking forward to next week?

Next week we ask that the remaining Year 9 Guided Choices Google forms are returned by Friday 12th February. Thanks to the 94 children who have already completed them. The information on these forms is used to create the Option blocks for next year so the more complete the return by the deadline the more accurate we can be in devising blocks that will allow the greatest number of children to have their first preferences.

We have already sent hundreds of letters to families for children who have been accessing all of their learning and handing in work. Next week we will finish off the term by sending out certificates for those children who have been "green" for engagement across a number of weeks.

I trust that you and your loved ones remain as well as can be.

Sylvia Thomas
Executive Principal