

12 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

As we close this half term, I would like to thank you again for your feedback, support and kindness. Many parents/carers have contacted us over the last few weeks, often to commend us for the work we are doing or to provide us with specific questions regarding remote learning and suggesting tweaks to our programme. This feedback has been essential for us, so thank you for taking the time to let us know how things are going. I would also like to thank you for your practical support of our work at home. Many of you will have full-time or part-time jobs, juggling these whilst helping your children with their home schooling is a balancing act which we do not underestimate!

To our students, I say how very much we are looking forward to having you all back at school, we are very proud of the way you have been working and communicating with us, teachers are reporting excellent engagement levels and I know you are doing your best. As winter turns to spring, please take some time to relax over half term and enjoy some physical exercise and the outdoors (ensuring you are observing C19 restrictions).

### **LEARNING AFTER HALF TERM**

After half-term, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will begin to receive more regular 'live' connections as well as examination groups from Years 10 to 13. These sessions will be organised through Teams meetings only. The sessions are designed to allow students to re-connect with their teachers alongside offering general task feedback, context and instructions for new tasks and answers to any questions or concerns. These connections will be created during normal timetabled lessons and I would encourage parents and carers to ensure their child attends these short sessions. All students will continue to experience a 'live' connection with their tutor. Full details of how students are expected to conduct themselves can be found below.

#### **'Live' Connections**

The 'live' connections are accessed through the Calendar on Teams. To join the session, the student is required to click on the relevant session and then click 'Join'. The student will then be placed into the session 'lobby' and wait for the teacher to admit them. For 'live' connections to run effectively and safely, it is important that you and your child are aware of the following:

#### **The teacher**

- Teachers always have due regard for the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy whilst carrying out live online lessons and pre-recorded teacher-led videos.
- Students are reminded not to share private information through the live online lesson system.
- Students have been made aware of the reporting lines, should they see or hear anything inappropriate during live lessons, or at any other time they are asked to contact Mrs White, our DSL, to report any concerns. Contact information is also on the school's website.
- Live connections will only take place on Teams. Teams has been set up so that only students with a school account may gain access to the connection.
- Teachers will ensure that the option 'Turn incoming cameras off' is selected. This means students cannot be seen during the 'live' connection.
- The teacher will record each lesson and the teacher will remind students that the meeting is being recorded. All live connections will be recorded for safeguarding purposes.



## The student

- Students are reminded not to speak during live online connections unless they are prompted to do so or have a question.
- Students are reminded that they should report any technical issues to their teacher as soon as possible, using a parent's device if they cannot access their own technology.
- Students are reminded to adhere to the school's Behavioural Policy at all times during live online connections, as they would during a normal school day.
- Inappropriate use of the Posts or Chat function will be forwarded to parents and Head of Year.
- Only use the chat for specific connection related questions. Questions should be targeted to the intended recipient so other people are not distracted. If it is just to the teacher then direct message the teacher and not the group.
- Teachers may mute any student who is disrupting the meeting by clicking on the student in 'Show participants' and selecting 'Mute participant.'
- Should a student's behaviour continue to disrupt the lesson, the student will be removed from the 'live' connection and parents will be notified.
- Students who breach the code of conduct will be disciplined in line with the Behavioural Policy.

## KEYWORKER SUPPORT

At present we are supporting approximately 10% of our school roll each day in school and are very pleased to contribute to the national effort in supporting the NHS, care sector and other essential workers. Teaching and support staff are working on a rota system (as they did in the first lockdown) with days in school spent supporting our year group 'bubbles' as well as continuing to make constant contact with those students studying remotely. I would like to thank staff at TBS for their resilience and good humour even though many of them also have young children at home, some also care for elderly relatives or have other demands on their time. I know many of them have been working very early mornings and late nights in order to manage their workload. I would also like to thank Mario Roncaglia, Chair of Governors and the Board for the enormous amount of support they have provided over the last few months; normal business has continued alongside significant support for all matters to do with the current pandemic.

## C19 TESTING

You will be aware we set up our in-house coronavirus testing site in January and I am pleased to inform you we have now conducted 800 tests in school, 22 on behalf of local primaries. Parents will be aware of the close relationship with schools in The Blandford Schools' Network and we were happy to assist fellow headteacher colleagues who approached us and asked if some of their staff could take advantage of our set-up. I would publicly like to thank the 14 members of the volunteer testing team who have worked tirelessly to ensure our testing area is sanitised, safe and operating in line with government guidance. All colleagues completed mandatory training at the end of the Xmas holidays and into the first week in January which meant we commenced testing at the earliest opportunity. The team includes current staff, an ex-GP, community volunteers (some with nursing experience) and governors. We were thrilled by the response to our request for help and are confident we will be able to scale up the testing regime (if required) when all students return to school. This really has been a massive team effort and a great example of the community and the school working together as a team for the benefit of all. There are some pictures below of The Stour Room having been converted as a testing centre, who would have thought?!



MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGE FOR ALL

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**THE BLANDFORD  
SCHOOL**



I will be in touch again after half term when hopefully we will know more about a possible return date for all.

Yours sincerely,

*Sally Wilson*

Sally Wilson  
Headteacher

