

Headteacher: Miss Caitlin Macrae

30th March 2020

Dear parents, carers and students

Re – Weekly Update 2

I hope that you and your families remain well and safe. Now that the first full week of learning at home is complete, I hope that students have adapted positively to the challenges of this new way of working. Ideally, they will be following the guidance they were given prior to leaving school, just over a week ago:

- Please keep, as much as possible, **to a normal school routine, starting your school day at 8.25am and completing 5 lessons worth of work each day** to the best of your ability.
- Please ensure you have **access to basic writing equipment, paper and a place to work.**
- **Check your timetable each day** and plan the order of the work you will complete
- If you can, get **fresh air and exercise**, where possible
- **Read as widely as possible.**
- **Check your school email daily** and respond promptly where required

We know that learning at home without a teacher present is very different (and much more of a challenge!) to learning in school. We really encourage students to get in touch with their teachers by school email if they have questions about the work set; staff will do their best to help. Students, of course, also need time in each day to spend with the family, to chat to friends through social media or phone, to enjoy themselves and to relax.

Students **will not** be set any work by their teachers over the Easter break. Year 7 to 11 students will instead be issued with a passport of optional activities to complete over that holiday period. This will be issued through Show My Homework. Year 12 and 13 students will continue to work on their ISPs (Independent Study Plans).

After Easter, the next set of learning tasks and resources will be set by teachers through Show My Homework on or around the 20th April for the next two week period.

For those students without internet access and/or access to a computer at home, work will continue to be posted out every two weeks.

Wellbeing

In last week's update, links to the Young Minds website were included. These were also shared with students through the tutor daily email. This week, I would like to make you aware of Kooth. Kooth provides online mental health and wellbeing support to young people via any internet accessible device. Kooth provides an opportunity to interact in a

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supportive way with other young people as well as receive support from a qualified counsellor. Kooth is safe, confidential, free and is available through a smartphone, tablet or computer with a good internet connection. Kooth is open 7 days per week, 365 days a year, from noon until 10pm weekdays and from 6pm until 10pm on Saturday and Sundays.

Young people can access this service by signing up on the Kooth site, at <https://kooth.com>. There is also a useful video which gives an overview of the service that Kooth provides. Watch it here <https://vimeo.com/318731977/a9f32c87de>

Free School Meals

If your child is in receipt of free school meals, you should have received your Sainsbury's voucher last week. Please contact us on admin@highfield.herts.sch.uk if you have still not received it. We will be sending out a further Sainsbury's voucher for free school meals for the period 20th April to 1st May 2020. You will receive this voucher by 20th April.

If you are struggling financially, but your child is not currently in receipt of free school meals, please be aware that free school meals are available for students of parents or carers that receive certain benefits. Please use this link to see if you are eligible: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

Year 11 and Year 13 qualifications

To follow up on my letter of 23rd March, there has been a further news release from Ofqual, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-update-on-2020-exams>. In this release, we are being told that detailed information for schools, students and parents about exactly how qualifications will be awarded, will be released this week. I will be in touch as soon as I know more.

Year 13 UCAS

For those Year 13 students applying for university, there has been a further news release from the government, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universities-told-not-to-alter-applicants-offers>.

UCAS have been in touch with all applicants to confirm changes to deadlines, but in summary these are:

- The deadline for applicants to reply to any offers received has moved from 5th to 19th May 2020
- The deadline for universities and colleges to make decisions and reply to applications has moved from 6th to 20th May 2020.

Please contact **Mr Furness** for further information, if required.

Trips

There are a number of trips and visits on the school calendar for next term. We are currently liaising with tour operators, travel companies and organisations so that we can make informed decisions about whether these trips will need to be cancelled, postponed or whether they can go ahead as planned. This will, of course, also depend on the latest

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guidance and advice from the government. We will be in touch about each trip after the Easter holiday to update you on progress. Thank you for your continued patience.

Items left in school

Some students may have items left in school, such as PE kits, equipment and medication. Once the government has confirmed that non-essential travel is appropriate, we will be in touch to let you know when these items can be picked up from school. If you **urgently** need any medication that is held in school for your child, please contact us on admin@highfield.herts.sch.uk.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the many messages of support and appreciation that we have received over the past couple of weeks. It really has made a positive difference in these unsettling and challenging times.

Wishing you all the best of health.

Kind regards

Caitlin Macrae
Headteacher