

Headteacher: Miss Caitlin Macrae

20th April 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

Re – **Weekly Update 3**

I hope you have all had a restful Easter break and that you and your families remain safe and well. As we begin our summer term, I wanted to take the chance to thank you for your continued efforts and support, in these strange and challenging times. As you will know, the government recently announced an extension to the national 'lockdown' for the next three weeks, so our current arrangements for school closure will also be extended for the foreseeable future.

Students in Year 7 to 10 and 12 will continue to be set work to complete at home by their teachers, every two weeks, through Show My Homework and are encouraged to get in touch with their teachers by school email if they have any problems or questions about the work set. For those students without internet access and/or access to a computer at home, work will continue to be posted out every two weeks. Tutors will continue to keep in touch with students in their tutor groups in all year groups through their daily email.

There has been a lot of coverage on social media and the news about the difficulties parents and carers have been facing in supporting the learning of their children at home and worries about children 'falling behind'. I absolutely recognise the worries and challenges of this situation for families. Please let me stress that there is absolutely no expectation that parents and carers replace the work that teachers do in the classroom. As you know, students have been asked to complete the tasks their teachers are setting them to the best of their ability, working the equivalent time as a school day, also taking time to read, exercise, enjoy themselves, relax and connect with family and friends. How you choose to structure this absolutely needs to be flexible to fit in with your family situation. If school work is causing problems or stress, please take a look at the attached guidance below, which might help. Please get in touch with us at admin@highfield.herts.sch.uk if we can help further.

Please also do not worry about your child falling behind with their learning. As a school, we are already thinking carefully about how we might reopen, when the time comes, to ensure that we are able to support students effectively, given the time they have been out of school and away from the classroom. We will make sure we get everyone back on track. I hope that goes some way to reassuring those of you who might be concerned or anxious.

Wellbeing

Holly Brothers, our Sixth Form Head Student Leader, has produced a short wellbeing top tips guide for students. This will be sent out by tutors via school email this week to students. The other four members of the Student Leadership Team will be producing their contribution to the guide weekly, one each week of this half term. Thank you to Holly and the team for their support in this area.

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Online Safety

There is a lot of support available to keep your child safe online, which continues to be really important at the current time. Here are some useful links to help parents and carers;

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Year 11 and Year 13 qualifications and learning resources

There has been further information and clarification from Ofqual and exam boards to schools over the Easter break. Mr Furness, Miss Waseem and Mrs Norwood will be in touch shortly about this and the reviewed guidance and resources that we will be asking Year 11 and Year 13 students to work on at home.

Careers Advice

Youth Connexions Hertfordshire offices are currently closed, however they are keen to support students and are offering to conduct guidance via the telephone. If your child needs to think through career decisions (particularly Year 11 and 13 students) and/or ensure they have their applications completed for college or an apprenticeship then please contact Mr Ali Sheriff. Mr Sheriff is The Highfield School's Youth Connexions Adviser. His details are:

Telephone: 01438 844625

E: ali.sheriff@hertfordshire.gov.uk

W: www.ychertfordshire.org

Also, from April 20th 2020 the BBC are offering on BBC Bitesize a section which is all about careers and we recommend students have a look at it: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers>

Free School Meals

Following my letter of the 8th April about Free School Meals, we have now ordered vouchers for families of students eligible for Free School Meals and are due to send these out over the next two days. If your child is eligible for Free School Meals and you have not received your voucher by Thursday 23rd April, please contact us on admin@highfield.herts.sch.uk to let us know.

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>

Equipment

If students are running out of basic equipment needed to complete their school work (for example pens, pencils, paper), please contact us by **Thursday 23rd April** on admin@highfield.herts.sch.uk to let us know, so we can arrange for equipment to be posted out.

The government has recently announced that they will be funding devices and routers for certain students. We expect to hear further details about this initiative in the next few days and will contact eligible families directly in due course.

Bereavement Support

If your family suffers a bereavement during the school closure, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us, either through your child's tutor or our Pastoral Team

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How to support Home Learning

Guidance for parents/carers to create a positive learning environment at home

Be realistic about what you can do

- **You're not expected to become teachers** and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply **providing your children with some structure** at home will help them to adapt. Use the tips below to help you make this work for your household
- **Take stock at the end of each week.** What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too
- **Share the load if there are 2 parents or carers at home. Split the day into 2-3 hour slots and take turns so you can do your own work**
- **Take care of your own health and wellbeing.** This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle. Take a look at the links in the school's weekly updates for some advice on mental health and wellbeing

Keep to a timetable wherever possible

- **Create and stick to a routine if you can. This is what children are used to.** For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day
- **Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible.** It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership
- **Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible.** If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible
- **If you have more than 1 child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household**
- **Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over**
- **Stick the timetable up on the wall** so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day
- **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life**

Make time for reading, exercise and breaks throughout the day

- If you have a **garden, use it regularly.** If you don't, try to get out **once a day** as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 metres apart from others)
- Ask your children to talk to you, or each other, about what they are **reading**
- Get your children to **write in a diary what they did each day** – this can be a clear sign that the 'school' day has ended

Make time for other activities

- Get your children to **write postcards** to their grandparents or to friends



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- **Give them chores** to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home
- Ask them to **help you cook** and bake
- Accept that **they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone** – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits

