

12th February 2020

Dear parents/carers

It has been a while since my last update. Although we have been operating the school remotely, staff and students are working well together in the current situation.

Thank you to all the parents who took the time to complete the recent **survey on remote learning**. With over 400 responses we have been able to thank teachers and share your support for their work. It also demonstrated that most students have adapted well to learning online. Teachers have developed their skills in teaching and supporting students remotely. We know that this can never replace being in a classroom and we value the suggestions that parents and students shared. Heads of Year or tutors will be contacting parents who asked for further support. We are also planning some parent workshops after half term.

Following the survey, there were three main themes of parental suggestions that emerged. We have been able to act on each of these. Firstly, a key focus has been for teachers to build in regular breaks from the screen and offer a variety of learning activities into all lessons. We are also now recommending that standard lesson time will be 45 minutes. Teachers will offer extra support by recording lessons and taking questions from any students after the lesson has finished. If students do not need help, they will have additional screen breaks before their next lesson. Secondly, teachers will use their camera when able to. Finally, regular communication and feedback will be given to students via Teams and the student bulletin. We are also planning an additional weekly communication to parents via a year group specific bulletin. We cannot praise you and our student community enough for their willingness to be flexible, patient and open minded. We know it has not been easy but are immensely proud of the efforts of the whole community.

You will all be aware that the **return of schools** is scheduled for 8th March, two full weeks after half term. Unfortunately, we have no more information on this currently. We do know from experience that the date is subject to change. Staff are keen and ready to return to the school site and to receive back all our students as soon as we are able.

Over the course of the last few weeks, we have trained staff to set up and operate a **COVID lateral flow testing centre in the school**. The small number of students and staff that have been on site have been undertaking regular tests. It is likely and sensible that we will be required to scale up this testing for all students as a condition of their return. To this end we ask that you complete a testing consent form (<https://tinyurl.com/yvnsqubm>). Once completed the form will be automatically returned to us. **We would appreciate your return by Tuesday 16th February so that we are able to plan our school return.** Before completing the form please refer to the [testing information on the COVID section of our website](#). Here you will find more detailed information about the tests.

Sixth form and university places: It has been another record-breaking year for UHS university applications. This year 91 year 13 students have applied for university places, all getting their applications in well before the extended deadline. We have already received lots of offers and were delighted to learn that three students have conditional offers to study at Oxford University and Cambridge University. UCAS Extra opens on 25th February; this allows students who are not holding offers to add additional choices.

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Students in year 12 have been busy attending virtual university open days, taking part in virtual work experience, attending relevant webinars linked to their future goals and completing MOOCs (massive open online courses). They have been building their student profiles to make them stand out when applying for apprenticeships, jobs and university places in the next year.

Year 11 - sixth form applications: Students will soon start to receive conditional offers for places in the sixth form. Students should check their emails regularly and confirm their offer when they receive it. A copy of the offer email will also be sent to parents and carers. Students can change courses by logging in to their application. Students can also change their options right up until they receive their GCSE results later in the year.

Events: Under this period of lockdown, staff have been able to operate many of our more normal calendared events albeit remotely. These include parents' evenings, year 9 options and support for our year 11 students with their sixth form and progression choices.

Parents' evenings: Remote parents' evenings have taken place for year 7 and year 11 parents, using the online platform School Cloud. Parents used our online booking system to book their own video call appointments. We have received overwhelming positive feedback from parents. You said that the system proved to be user friendly and a straightforward way to communicate with staff. It is likely that while group gatherings are restricted future parents' evenings will be held in this format. You will receive plenty of notification in advance. Next on the calendar is our sixth form parents' evening on Thursday 25th February.

Y9 options: The options process starts straight after half term with a special assembly for all Y9 students first thing on Monday 22nd February. This will be followed up on Tuesday 2nd March with an options afternoon. Parents and students will be given the opportunity to meet and to discuss potential choices. There are lots of events planned, including sample lessons, special videos for every subject and the launch of a dedicated Teams page and section on our website. Parents of Y9 students will receive an invite to the options afternoon, an electronic options form and their child's latest grades, all of which will help them come to the very important decision of what subjects to study.

Examinations and end of course assessment: Students in years 11 and 13 know that formal examinations will not take place this summer. They will instead be replaced with a range of assessments that consider all the hard work that they are doing. We have been advised that in the week beginning 22nd February we will have the final details of this. Our focus now is to reassure our students that they should keep working in their remote lessons. They should be assured that their hard work will be rewarded at the end of their course.

Parent workshops: The Flexible Learning Centre will be running regular virtual coffee drop-in sessions after half term. These are for parents whose child has SEND. They will offer an informal conversation about the support the school is offering to their son/daughter. Sessions at various times during the day will give all parents the opportunity to join. Details will follow in individual invitations by email.

Data for mobile devices: If your child needs additional data on any mobile device, we can request extra data for students in years 7 to 11. The following networks are taking part in the scheme: BT, EE, Lycamobile, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile and Vodafone. Please complete the form available on our website at <https://www.uhs.org.uk/page/?title=Increasing+data+allowances&pid=335>. Alternatively, you can contact the school and we will be able to complete the form on your behalf.

Independent learning study portal: A reminder that students have access to our [study portal](#) that focuses on developing key independent learning skills. The portal is made up of six sections: knowledge organisers, study skills, exam skills, literacy and numeracy, remote learning websites and key dates and events. To support your child when working independently at home, please see the attached document which includes instructions on how to use this platform.

Keeping safe: We know that the vast majority of our students are well and safe. However, we are also aware that sometimes they have personal concerns or are worried about their friends. In the student bulletin this week there will be a reminder to all about the importance of contacting school staff if they have any concerns.

Free school meals: Parents of students eligible for free school meals have been sent supermarket vouchers fortnightly. If you have not received these please contact the finance team. The national scheme has now reopened and future vouchers will be through Edenred. Click [here](#) for more information. Vouchers will continue through the lockdown period, except in school holidays. Here support will be provided by the council through the [Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#). The council will contact all parents. If you have any queries please contact them on 01895 558200 or wintergrant@hillingdon.gov.uk.

We understand that the circumstances of some families are continuing to change due to COVID-19. It is possible that you may now be eligible to claim free school meals. If you think this could be the case, please complete the [application form](#) available on the school website. Even if you are not currently eligible, by completing this form the system will alert us if you were to become eligible later.

As we approach the half term break, I offer my best wishes to all in our school community. I hope that you will be able to enjoy something special together with your family over this week. Lighter evenings, some sunshine and more optimistic daily news will all help.

Yours faithfully



N B Clemens
Principal