

Friday 12 February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope and trust that you are well and are keeping safe.

I am writing today to ensure that you remain as informed as is possible, given the circumstances, regarding a range of matters. Again, I will hopefully provide some clarity, but should I fail to do so, and should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. I also provide for your convenience, within the body of this letter, links ([in blue](#)) to sources of information, guidance, regulations, and advice, should you wish to consult them for more detail. Given the length of this communication, I summarise below the contents for each section. If you are reading this electronically, clicking or tapping on the respective section will take you directly to it.

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School Reopening

In his [Press Conference](#) on 27 January, the Prime Minister stated that 'March 8 is the earliest date by which we might responsibly be able to [commence the reopening of schools].' In the [House of Commons on 10 February](#) the Prime Minister reiterated that 'the settled will of most people in this House is to get our schoolchildren back on 8 March, if we possibly can,' and confirmed that HM Government will 'be setting out... as much as we can say on Monday [15 February].' He also confirmed that 'in the week of 22 February, we will be setting out a road map and the way forward for schools.' We will, of course keep you fully informed as and when we receive further information.

February half-term

As confirmed in my letter of [29 January](#), and as confirmed in the updated Department for Education (DfE) [guidance for schools](#) during the national lockdown, all 'schools will close as usual over February half-term.'

To clarify, as the DfE confirmed in a communication to all schools on 26 January, this means that we will not be open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week.

Free School Meal provision and other support over half term

As I indicated in my letter of [26 January](#), the voucher scheme that was provided by Devon County Council (DCC) over Christmas through [HM Government's £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#), will be used again 'to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it' over the February half term. Eligible parents and carers have received a separate communication from our Trust colleagues, providing them with their unique voucher code for each child, outlining the detail about how to redeem such, and providing information about how to access help if required.

In short, each code can be used once on the [Hawk Select](#) website to redeem vouchers to the value of £15 per child for Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrison's, Asda, Aldi, M&S Food and Waitrose. Parents and carers can save the vouchers to their phone or tablet to use online (depending on the supermarket) or show at the checkout in store. Alternatively, parents and carers can print the vouchers off to give to the cashier. (Please note also that if you are a parent or carer who received a voucher code for the Christmas holidays and have yet to use it, please do so by Sunday 24 February before its expiration.)

May I please urge any parent or carer that has any issue accessing the [Hawk Select](#) website, or otherwise completing the process, to seek support as outlined in the letter sent separately, or by contacting us directly. Parents and carers may also contact the DCC education helpline (0345 155 1019) with any questions or queries.

I also reiterate again that if your child is currently not eligible for free school meals, but because of any change in your circumstances may now be, that you please check and apply online through the [Devon Citizen's Portal](#) as soon as possible, or call the education helpline (0345 155 1019). In addition, if — as a result of the pandemic — you are worrying about money and are struggling to pay for basic household essentials, [further government support](#) is available. You can also apply for urgent help via the [£170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#) through funding that DCC have made available via District Council hardship funds: You can access information about the support available [here](#).

Contact Tracing over February half-term

As part of the continued national effort to limit the spread of the virus, over the coming half term week we will continue to assist the NHS and Public Health England (PHE) and provide contact tracing for those students and staff who have been attending our on-site provision for vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers. We will assist PHE by identifying close contacts and issuing self-isolation advice, but also by maintaining our records to help trace transmission within the community.

To this end, I would be grateful if you would inform us if your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) whether they have attended school on site or not. In summary:

- If your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), parents and carers should notify the College via the dedicated email address COVID@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk, which will be checked each day. (Please note that notification by any other means may not be picked up.)
- If your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms (or otherwise taken the test) more than 48 hours since last being in school, schools are not required to take any action and parents and carers should follow the contact tracing instructions that will be provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- If your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms (or otherwise taken the test) within 48 hours of the last day they attended school, the school will identify close student and staff contacts and advise self-isolation (as your child in these circumstances may have been infectious whilst in school).
 - If you do need to notify us, please use COVID@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk and complete this brief [survey](#) to provide necessary detail.
 - I repeat overleaf, for your convenience, the definitions of 'contact' that we must adhere to (full source detail can be accessed [here](#)). In short, a 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic (or date of test if the person was asymptomatic) up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (or date of test) — i.e., when they are infectious to others. Being in 'contact' with a person who has tested positive means:
 - ⇒ Face-to-face contact within 1m.
 - ⇒ Contact within 1m without face-to-face contact for 1 minute or longer.
 - ⇒ Contact within 2m for longer than 15 minutes.
 - ⇒ Travel with the person who has tested positive in a small vehicle.
 - ⇒ Travel in a large vehicle near the person who has tested positive.

Summer 2021 examinations

There has been no further update beyond the detail I have provided in my recent letters of [29 January](#) and [21 January](#) about the proposals of the respective consultations on [how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021](#), and on the [alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021](#). The Interim Chief Regulator for Ofqual has, however, published a blog post giving a '[consultation update and a proposal for externally-set papers](#)' — to allay concerns that some students had expressed in response to the respective consultations that the proposal 'to have externally-set papers or tasks to help teachers to assess their students... are exams by the back door.' Again, we will of course keep parents and carers and students fully updated as and when decisions are made and published, which are expected 'later in the month'.

Parents meetings

After the half-term we will be starting to reschedule Parents' meetings, to be hosted remotely. These will begin with an opportunity for the parents of Y11 and Y13 students to meet with subject teachers from 2 March (letters providing more detail have been distributed to parents of Y11 and Y13 students separately). We intend to host a remote information meeting in the preceding week for parents of Y11 and Y13 students to share more information about how grades will be awarded this summer, given by this time we hope that the decisions from the consultations on [how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021](#), and on the [alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021](#) would have been published.

Rapid Results Testing Programme

I can confirm that, if consent has been provided, all children will be tested twice on their eventual return to school, 3-5 days apart, as part of the asymptomatic testing programme. As I shared in my letter of [29 January](#), there have been some important and significant changes to the mass testing programme in schools, including the pausing of daily testing of contacts of positive cases (who will instead need to self-isolate), and the removal of the need for a confirmatory PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test following a positive result with an LFD (lateral flow device) test. We will, of course, provide more information regarding the testing schedule in readiness for our reopening in due course.

Keeping in Touch (January 2021) Surveys: Feedback

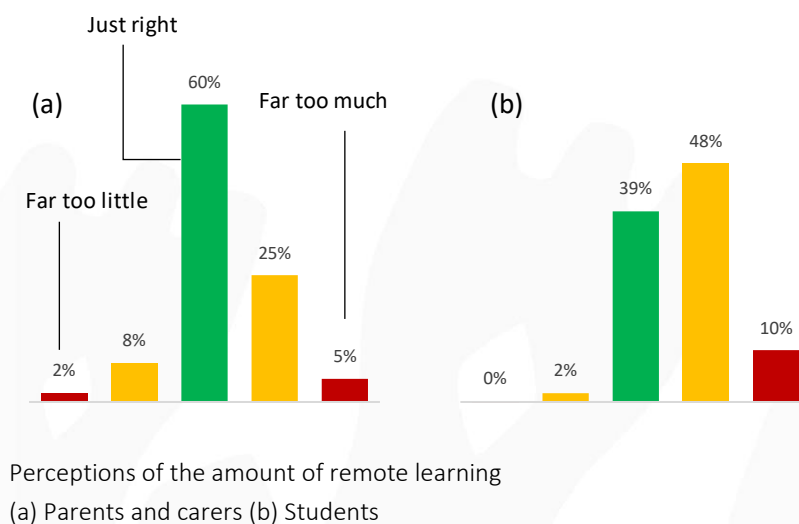
Thank you very much to the nearly 400 parents and carers and 600 students who completed our latest 'Keeping in Touch' questionnaire, which focused on the remote learning our students have been engaging with throughout the period of this National Lockdown. We devise and use these surveys to assist the evaluation of our remote education provision (alongside other monitoring), to better appreciate — and help us try and remove — any barriers students and families may be facing, and to gauge the wider understanding of our expectations and duties as set out in updated [DfE guidance](#) and relayed to families via my letter of [15 January](#).

We are genuinely very grateful for such engagement and very much appreciate the time and thought that people gave to complete the questionnaires. And I want to reiterate, unapologetically again here, that we greatly value the feedback we receive, whether to reinforce aspects of our provision that are working well, or to point out aspects of our provision that we could think about again or do better. The best way we can serve your children is by working in cooperative partnership with you, with openness, honesty, and transparency.

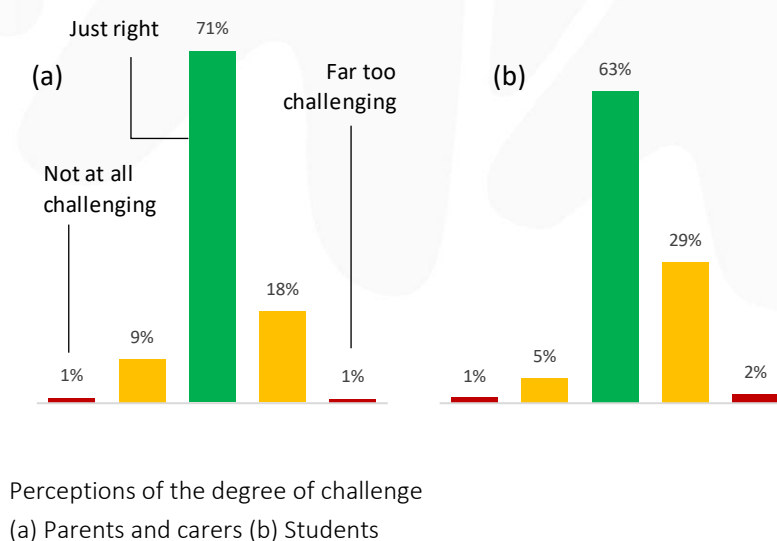
To this end, I note here for your information a summary of the feedback from our analysis.

- 80% of parents and carers are satisfied with the remote education we are providing, with 25% parents and carers 'very satisfied' and 6 parents and carers (1.6%) 'not at all satisfied'.
- 81% of parents indicate that their children are coping with the current situation.

- Most parents and carers (60%) think that the amount of remote learning is 'just right,' although most students (59%) think that there is too much. A higher proportion of parents and carers (30%) think that there is too much remote learning than who think there is not enough (10%). Notably, however 80% of students report that they spend around or less than the minimum amount of remote education all schools must provide for students each day (i.e. 5 hours).



- Most parents (71%) consider the challenge of the remote learning to be 'just right', as do most students (61%). Of those who do not, higher proportions think that it is too challenging rather than not challenging enough. There is also a notable association between perception of the amount of time spent on remote learning and the perceived challenge of the work: 4 in every 5 parents and 4 in every 5 students who report that the work is too challenging, also consider there to be too much.



- 34% of parents report that their children are not motivated with their remote learning, compared to 60% of the students themselves. Moreover, there is a notable association between parents' overall satisfaction with remote education and how they feel about their children's motivation: 68% of parents who are not satisfied with remote education also report that their children are not motivated (this reflects [research recently published by Ofsted](#) that 'engagement and motivation remains a significant challenge for schools providing remote education').
- 15% of parents and carers and 9% of students raised subject specific queries.
- Around 16% of parents and carers reported that logistical/practical issues were affecting their children's remote learning. More than half of the issues reported involved poor internet, with other issues centring largely around the difficulties families are facing when juggling competing commitments.
- 70% of students reported that they can get away from computer/device screens during break and are able to be active.

Keeping in Touch (January 2021) Surveys: Our response

As a result of the feedback from parents and carers and students through the 'Keeping in Touch' surveys, alongside our own monitoring and that undertaken with our Trust colleagues, and in consideration of [research shared by Ofsted](#) and other sources, the following summary actions have been taken:

- Share analysis with senior leaders, curriculum and pastoral leads, all staff, Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust colleagues, Governors, and (now) families.
- Address and resolve all logistical or practical barriers to remote learning raised by parents or students through the survey, either directly or otherwise. (Note that only one issue remains).
- Under the stewardship of subject leaders, identify, isolate, and address all subject-specific queries raised by parents and carers and students.
- Under the stewardship of pastoral leaders, ensure contact with — and support for — all students identified in the survey by parents and carers as 'struggling' or 'struggling a lot', in addition to the ongoing interventions that are already being provided for identified students.
- Ensure contact is made with parents and carers (who did not respond to the survey) of students from groups typically at most risk of underachievement — to discuss engagement with remote learning and ascertain what further support we may be able to offer. This is in addition to the ongoing interventions already being provided for identified students, and to the regular contact made by tutors and teachers. (Contact has been made with around 250 parents and carers.)
- Dedicate Professional Learning sessions for teachers on remote learning practice, focusing on themes that have emerged from the survey and our own monitoring and evaluation of provision. (Sessions have run on effective Microsoft Teams 'live' sessions, the use of recorded 'direct instruction' video — such as that produced by Oak National Academy — to support asynchronous approaches, the provision of effective remote feedback, and effective scaffolding in remote lessons. All sessions are based on research and evidence of best practice.)

- Focus monitoring and evaluation on themes that have emerged from the 'Keeping in Touch' survey, namely the consistent structure of remote lessons and incorporation of the key defined elements, provision of effective remote feedback, monitoring and reporting engagement, and frequency and type of 'live' contact.
- Review policy and reiterate expectations for — and of — staff, students, and parents and carers, through a 'Policy in Summary' document ([see appendix](#)) that reflects:
 - ⇒ the adaptations we have made to our provision,
 - ⇒ the key aspects of our existing practice so that all stakeholders understand our responsibilities and duties as set out in current [DfE guidance \(pp52-56\)](#),
 - ⇒ the evidence on which our policy has been founded, such as that suggested by [Ofsted research](#) and the synthesis of best evidence from the [Education Endowment Foundation](#).

Thank you very much again for your continued support. I appreciate that this is a lengthy communication, and I am again grateful for the time you have taken to read it. However, please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

As ever, keep safe, and keep looking after yourself and each other.

Yours sincerely,



Derrick Brett (Principal).



Remote Learning Policy in Summary

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- 1 Teachers will provide remote learning lessons, according to students' scheduled timetable, that will follow the planned curriculum for each subject and last for the same length of time as core teaching time when in school:
 - Lesson 1 (periods 1 and 2) arranged in two sections, lasting 120 minutes in total.
 - Lesson 2 (periods 3 and 4) arranged in two sections, lasting 120 minutes in total.
 - Lesson 3 (period 5) lasting 60 minutes.
- 2 Remote learning lessons will be posted on Class Charts, marked as 'blended learning', and set to ensure that they are available to be accessed from 8am of the day of the scheduled lesson.
 - Each remote learning lesson will be posted on Class Charts with the standard heading — Remote Learning | Day | DD/MM/YYYY | Subject.
 - The issue and due dates will both be set to the day of the scheduled lesson.
 - All linked documents will be available in pdf format.
 - Any live session will be detailed on the Class Charts entry, including the start time of the session and focus (e.g. introduction to the lesson, feedback from last lesson, etc.).
- 3 Teachers will provide concise advice to guide students through each remote learning lesson, including the time to spend on activities, ensuring the following elements are evident:
 - Explanation / modelling
 - ⇒ All lessons will incorporate an element of direct instruction, e.g. through a pre-recorded video (either College produced or otherwise available, such as Oak National Academy) or 'live' through Microsoft Teams.
 - ⇒ Explanations will be given before exercises and build clearly on students' prior learning or on how students' understanding could be subsequently assessed.
 - Independent activities
 - ⇒ Activities will be meaningful and ambitious, providing progressive, scaffolded cognitive demand, with prompts for students to consider strategies if stuck.
 - ⇒ Teachers will inform students when they will be available in real time for support — e.g. through interactive discussion via Microsoft Teams 'chats' — when students are completing independent activities.

- Opportunities to reflect and check
 - ⇒ Proxies for immediate, instant feedback will be provided such as model answers, solutions, and responses, to support students' own assessment of their progress.
 - ⇒ Students will be prompted with questions / tasks to reflect on their work, including through low-stakes quizzes and tests focusing on retrieval.
 - ⇒ The use of adaptive learning software (where available), questioning in live sessions, and interactive real-time 'chat' discussions will enable a feedback loop.
- 4 Live Microsoft Teams sessions will take place in at least 50% of lessons, within the normal scheduled lesson time, including observing any break/lunch times (to allow students in College to participate).
- Teachers will schedule sessions in advance, but at least from the start of the day.
 - Teachers will adhere to 'Acceptable Usage Policy' to ensure live sessions are run safely, and students and parents and carers will adhere to respective 'Remote Learning Responsible Usage Agreements': When students attend a live session, students and parents and carers are accepting the conditions laid out in the respective responsible usage agreements.
 - Sessions will be recorded and saved for safeguarding purposes and to provide students with continued access for 28 days.
 - Teachers will acknowledge attendance at live Microsoft Teams sessions via Class Charts at the end of each session, using 'Attended online lesson' or 'Did not attend online lesson' notifications. Achievement points may also be used to reward contributions.
- 5 Teachers will routinely (i.e. in most lessons) set an activity that requires submission to permit review and feedback through subsequent remote learning lessons.
- Types of submission will depend on the work set and may be via a photo of work produced, completion of a quiz online, or completion of work via subject-specific online platforms.
 - A reasonable amount of time will be allowed for students to complete and submit work outside of the timetabled lesson 'window'.
 - Teachers will acknowledge work submitted via Class Charts using the 'Work Submitted' notifications, or achievement points where warranted. Where work is not submitted the 'Behaviour Observed' notification will be used with a suitable supportive comment.
 - Teachers will review students' submitted work regularly to check students' understanding and inform subsequent curriculum planning, i.e. teachers will adapt remote learning lessons in response to their assessment of students' submitted work.
 - ⇒ The purpose of assessments that take place remotely is to feed back into the curriculum and subsequent remote lesson planning.
 - ⇒ Any other purpose of assessment that takes place remotely will be made clear.
 - ⇒ Beyond this, feedback will take various forms and will not necessarily occur through individual 'marking' of every piece of submitted work.
 - Teachers and subject leaders will monitor student engagement in specific subjects, tutors and pastoral leaders will monitor student engagement across subjects.



Important

Advice for schools

CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

A CHILD WHO DEVELOPS ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A POTENTIAL CORONAVIRUS CASE:



NEW CONTINUOUS COUGH

This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if the child usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual)



FEVER (TEMPERATURE OF 37.8°C OR HIGHER)

The child will also feel hot to touch on their chest or back



A LOSS OR CHANGE TO SENSE OF SMELL OR TASTE

this means the child has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

MOST CHILDREN WITH CORONAVIRUS HAVE AT LEAST ONE OF THESE SYMPTOMS.



If a child is unwell with one or more of these specific symptoms they should be told not to come into school or sent home as soon as possible and advised to get a coronavirus test. **ONLY** those children with one or more of these symptoms or those advised by their clinician or Local Authority should get a test.



Children reporting other symptoms such as a headache, sore throat, runny or sniffly nose, earache, itchy eyes, lethargy or tiredness **WITHOUT** a fever should **NOT** be treated as potential coronavirus cases or advised to take a test.

If the national guidance on symptoms of coronavirus in children changes, updated information will be provided at a local level as soon as possible. This information about coronavirus symptoms in children can be shared with all school teaching and administration staff as well as parents and carers where necessary.

For further guidance on coronavirus testing for schools, please read the letter from PHE and NHS Test and Trace to school and college leaders at: bit.ly/phe-schools

ENGLAND LOCKDOWN

STAY AT HOME

**THE NEW VARIANT OF CORONAVIRUS IS SPREADING FAST.
WE ALL NEED TO PLAY OUR PART TO STOP THE SPREAD.**

▶ LEAVING HOME

You must not leave, or be outside of your home or garden, except for a very limited set of exemptions e.g. to shop for basic necessities, exercise, go to work if you cannot do so from home, or to escape risk of harm.

▶ MEETING OTHERS

You cannot leave your home to meet socially with anyone, except with your household or support bubble (if eligible to form one). Stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in your household or support bubble.

▶ EXERCISE

You may exercise on your own, with your household or support bubble, or with one person from another household (when on your own). Stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in your household or support bubble.

▶ BARS, PUBS AND RESTAURANTS

Hospitality closed aside from sales by takeaway (until 11pm), click-and-collect, drive-through or delivery. Alcohol cannot be purchased through takeaway or click-and-collect from hospitality venues.

▶ RETAIL

Essential shops can open. Non-essential retail must close and can only run click-and-collect and delivery.

▶ WORK AND BUSINESS

Everyone must work from home unless they are unable to do so.

▶ EDUCATION

Early years settings open. Primary and secondary schools and colleges move to remote provision except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Most university students to move to remote learning.

▶ LEISURE AND SPORTING FACILITIES

Closed, with limited exceptions.

▶ ACCOMMODATION

Closed, with limited exceptions.

▶ PERSONAL CARE

Closed.

▶ ENTERTAINMENT

Closed.

▶ OVERNIGHT STAYS

You must not stay overnight away from home. Limited exceptions apply e.g. to stay with your support bubble.

▶ WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

Funerals of up to 30 people permitted. Weddings up to 6 people permitted in exceptional circumstances. Wakes and other linked ceremonial events of up to 6 permitted.

▶ PLACES OF WORSHIP

Places of worship can remain open and communal worship is permitted, but you must not mix with those outside your household or support bubble.

▶ TRAVELLING

You must stay at home. If you do leave home for a very limited set of exemptions, you should stay local in the village, town, or part of the city where you live where possible. Do not travel abroad unless an exemption applies.

▶ CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE

Shielding reintroduced across England. You should not travel to work, school, college or university and should limit the time you spend outside the home. You should only go out for medical appointments, exercise or if it is essential.

▶ CARE HOME VISITS

Visits can take place with arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not allowed. No visits will be permitted in the event of an outbreak but end of life visits are permitted in all circumstances.