

Tuesday 26 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope and trust that you and your family are well, and keeping safe.

I write today to simply keep in touch, and ensure that you are kept up to date on various matters. In doing so I will hopefully, again, provide some clarity and address some concerns, questions, or queries that you may have, but should I fail to do so, and should you still require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. I also provide again 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.

'Keeping in Touch' Survey

As promised, to help us ensure that we are supporting you and your child through this period as best we can, I would be very grateful if you could complete this [Keeping in Touch: Parents and carers \(January 2021\)](#) questionnaire. It has a specific focus on the remote learning your child has been engaging with for the first three weeks of this term. We are also seeking feedback from our students and would be grateful if you could encourage your child to take a little time to complete the [Keeping in Touch: Students \(January 2021\)](#) questionnaire as well. (We will also send a link to this questionnaire for students via Class Charts.) I want to state again that we genuinely appreciate any feedback you give us, 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. Both surveys close at 11:45pm on Sunday 31 January.

Remote Learning

May I thank you again, sincerely, for your support with remote learning at home. As I stated in my letter of [15 January](#), and as I unashamedly repeat here, we are genuinely very grateful for your support, for the encouragement you are giving your child, and understand how difficult it can be juggling so many conflicting obligations. Further to the summary of our Remote Learning provision provided on the second page of my letter of [4 January](#), and further to the additional guidance I shared in my letter of [15 January](#), we have reviewed and published our [Remote Learning policy](#) in light of:

- New expectations and duties recently set out by HM Government in their [guidance](#) (pp46-50).
- Further evidence provided through research (including this [synthesis of research evidence](#) from the Education Endowment Foundation, and this [research](#) from Ofsted —distilled in the guide on 'What's working well in remote education' I recently shared — that draws on findings from Ofsted's [interim visits to schools](#) in the autumn).

- The further feedback on remote learning provision during periods of self-isolation that parents and carers provided through our 'Keeping in Touch (December 2020) update' survey.

We will keep this policy under constant and regular review, and particularly after feedback we receive from parents and carers and students through respective 'Keeping in Touch' surveys. We will, of course, communicate any changes to this policy to you where applicable.

Device and Data provision

We have provided laptops to around one in every seven of our students and provided support for many families with the provision of data. We have contacted every family that has requested support through our various 'Home Remote Access Audit' surveys, or through other lines of communication, and will continue to ensure that we support families as comprehensively as we can to ensure that none of our students are digitally disadvantaged. Again, should you have any issues or require any support, please do not hesitate to contact us via datacheck@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk. Similarly, please use this address if you require the loan of a device but have still not yet informed us, or if you think we will be able to support you with internet access.

Free School Meals provision and other support

We have been in contact with all parents and carers of students eligible for free school meals to ensure that they receive their entitlement via the National Voucher Scheme that was launched on [18 January](#). May I please urge all families with children eligible for free school meals to contact us for support if they are having any issues ordering or redeeming their vouchers. Moreover, a [user guide](#) has been produced for parents and carers by the Department for Education (DfE) and Edenred (distributor), which includes links to further support if there are any issues redeeming vouchers. Further information can also be found in this [FAQ document](#).

The national voucher scheme that was provided by Devon County Council over Christmas through [HM Government's £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#), will be used again to support families over the February half term. We will provide more information for families in due course.

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 coronavirus 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](#).

Summer 2021 Exams

Further to my letter of [21 January](#) to parents and carers of students in Y11 and Y13, and to the students themselves, may I remind you that the consultation on '[how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021](#),' and on '[alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021](#)' close this Friday 29 January at 11:45pm. If you would like to respond to the consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021, please follow [this link](#). If you would like to respond to the consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021, please follow [this link](#). We will finalise our 'Exceptional Arrangements' policy for 'Summer 2021 Awards of GCSE, AS, A level, and Vocational and Technical Qualifications' once dates and decisions are confirmed from the joint DfE and Ofqual consultations, and once further detail and guidance is provided.

Rapid Results Testing Programme

Further to my letter of Friday [15 January](#), and my letter of Sunday 17 January to inform all families of the confirmed case of COVID-19 amongst staff, I can confirm that schools will not be carrying out any daily testing of contacts of positive cases for the immediate future, and will instead continue to advise self-isolation in such circumstances. In a communication to schools on 20 January, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed that daily 'serial' contact testing is being 'paused'. He stated that 'in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of the new variant, further evaluation work is required to understand the impact of daily contact testing, instead of self-isolation for those who have been in contact with a case, to make sure it is achieving its aim of breaking chains of transmission and reducing cases of the virus in the community.' You can read the 'position statement' of Public Health England (PHE) [here](#).

Thank you very much once again for your ongoing support. 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).

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.