



Kingsmead School



A PARTNER ACADEMY IN JOHN TAYLOR MAT

Head of School: Mrs M Mincher, Bsc, NPQH

RESILIENT



INNOVATIVE



MINDFUL



EMPLOYABLE



12th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We wanted to firstly thank everyone for the support and messages of thanks that the school and staff have received as we have set up lateral flow testing and entered another full national lockdown. We all really appreciate the kind letters, Facebook messages and emails that have been sent.

We also wanted to keep you informed of how learning at home is progressing; we currently have 99.3% of students fully engaged in learning from home. Fun activities, clubs and quizzes are starting up again to support our children and give them something to look forward to. We are painfully aware of how many opportunities so many have missed and are trying to think of ways that we can look to the future, where we will try hard to redress the balance and offer the chance to re-live some of those life chances.

Some important messages:

1. Home learning – From Mr Cope – Deputy Head for Learning and Teaching

We learnt a great deal from the first lockdown in March, the two separate year group isolations and numerous individuals who isolated for 14 or 10 days. We feel this has given us a great insight into what works for our students and what does not. With every school in the country managing this in their own way and debate about how best to manage the situation, it seemed it was time to share our ever-developing approach.

The point of what we do as teachers is to support learning. A lot of discussion in the media has centred on 'high quality curriculum resources or videos,' as well as the benefits and drawbacks of 'live lessons.' We have chosen to replicate as closely as we can our normal lessons and this has been published in detail on our website from the main pop up menu. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and John Hattie have released reports highlighting how to achieve effective IT-based remote learning. We have used these recommendations along with parent and student feedback from the last lockdown to structure our approach.

In short:

- Our lessons reflect the school day, following our school curriculum as if we were still in the school building;
- Our lessons have been adapted slightly to allow students to understand their tasks in a remote setting. The amount of content and challenge remains high;
- Students will receive acknowledgement of their work every lesson, sometimes as a whole group, and detailed feedback will be given according to our 'normal' feedback policy for key, independently written and structured pieces;
- We use a range of learning activities including on paper, outside and research-based just as we would in class.

Our use of Zoom and/or Team sessions reflect how we would engage with students in the classroom. Due to the reports in the press at the moment you may wonder if whole-class live lessons (1 hour long Zoom or videos) would reflect more closely what happens in our usual classrooms; that's absolutely not the case, we would not stand and talk for an hour at a time, for five hours straight. Children would very quickly become bored as would anyone. A



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normal lesson would involve an explanation of the task or a chance to ask questions, small group work to provide challenge and application of new knowledge, or alternatively provide additional support for those who need it.

From extensive parent and student voice after and during the last lockdown we believe that **effective** use of Teams/Zoom and videos is the key. They should be part of a lesson, but children still need time to process and apply their learning, ensuring that their understanding deepens.

Evidence-based research has particularly noted that pre-recorded explanations and guidance is effective. The instructions can be rehearsed and planned to better explain the concepts and tasks the students must understand. Indeed, the students have control to replay parts they are unsure about as well as the content and we can include video clips and other visual tools making learning clearer.

Kingsmead is a school where we aim for an outstanding quality provision. By using a variety of tools including live, pre-recorded, independent, group learning we feel better equipped to guide your child through the next stage of their learning. Teaching staff can direct their support as they would in a class-based lesson; to those that can be further challenged or those who are struggling.

We recognise that it is difficult to fully recreate our classrooms. We are in a far better position at this point than many schools, having planned for blended learning this year. We have a regular means of sharing learning with students (satchel one), as well as the blended learning platform to provide resources and support.

A new development for this unexpected national lockdown is that students are being provided with 'online workbooks' to store their work and the feedback given on how to improve. This replicates the class books students use in school, ensuring that they can look back at previous work or answers. Staff have started trialling these and messaging students about them. The individual code given to students can be copied in full and put into the website browser to gain direct access to their document. We recommend your child keeps a record of these codes in one place on a document so they can easily refer to prior work as needed. On this last point, we will be sending around some further guidance to students on satchel one.

We are currently offering children the opportunity to come into school on either Tuesday at 8.30 am and Thursday 8.30 am to collect paper, books, reading books and textbooks from school to supplement their home learning. They will receive an email from their Progress Leader informing them of when they can come to school, to fetch these items in a covid-secure way, if they wish.

2. Fundraising

We are still raising money to pay for activity week in July, if it is able to go ahead. Depending on the Pandemic, we want to have days of fun for all children including water-zorbing, bouncy castles and barbecues. We know that this depends on Covid-19 restrictions, but we think that it is important to have something exciting for all of the children to look forward to. Please help us if you can. The Chair of the PTFA Julie can be reached through the finance email if you would like to join and help to make a difference to the opportunities that we can offer.



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3. Year 8 Standon Bowers trip – From Mr Truby – Senior Leader Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 and 9)

This booking has been kept live and we have negotiated a 'Year 9' version if we cannot go in June 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. Year 8 have missed so much and we want to still offer them the opportunity to camp, canoe and be happy.

4. Year 9 Options – From Mr Truby – Senior Leader Key stage 3 (Year 7, 8 and 9)

This term, Year 9 will make informed choices on the subjects they wish to specialise in for their GCSEs. These decisions will shape the journey that our students take as they move into Key Stage 4 and beyond, building their skills and knowledge to ensure the best outcomes possible, that will enable each child to follow their dreams in the wider world.

Despite the unique circumstances, as always, we will adapt and work together to provide the best, most effective experience as possible. We are making the necessary changes to ensure as much of our planned programme of events can still happen, albeit remotely. These will include:

- Taster Lessons in options subjects that students don't study on the KS3 curriculum i.e. Business Studies. These will be via Zoom;
- Remote 'drop-in' Options Evening, giving parents and students the opportunity to talk to staff about course content and suitability;
- Careers assemblies via SMHW with our Careers Advisor, Mrs Butler;
- A careers interview with every single Year 9 student. These will be conducted via phone call or Zoom.

A letter with more specific information regarding Year 9 Options will be shared with parents next week.

5. Parents Evening Date Changes - From Mr Truby – Senior Leader Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 and 9)

Year 9 parents evening will now take place on **Tuesday 2nd February 3pm-5.30pm**. These will take place via Zoom. This will be an opportunity for you to meet your child's subject teachers and to discuss their progress. In addition, parents and teachers will be able to take this occasion to discuss suitability for potential subject choices for GCSE. More information on Year 9 parents evening will follow next week.

Year 12 and Year 13 parents evening will now take place on **Tuesday 9th February due to changes in the mock exam dates**. More information will follow in due course.



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6. Year 7 Read/Write Camp – From Mr Russell – Assistant Headteacher

This will happen – it might just be Year 8 read/write camp!

We are so proud of our students, once again, in how they are maturely approaching another change to their learning. We are keen to keep them engaged and upbeat during this time. As mentioned before there are several activities, challenges and fun social events we are planning with the help of our student leadership team. We are acutely aware of keeping students in touch with each other and maintaining a healthy, positive outlook.

Kingsmead is here for your child and family, and we are keen to help in any way that we can. Let us know if there are any issues promptly and we will try and resolve them as quickly as we can.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Maria Mincher
Head of School