

WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

Tuesday 26 July 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

Last week I informed you that we were having some issues with our IT system and I write to update you on the situation.

I can now confirm that the Trust suffered a Cyber incident and we are now in the process of putting in place a plan that will enable our IT system to be re-built. We are aiming to get everything back up and running as quickly as we can.

Thankfully, the disruption was lessened as the school/college term was concluding in preparation for the summer term break. We are very grateful to our parents/carers and our pupils/students for working at home for the last two days of the summer term.

Recently, the Government has advised that the UK's education sector is currently experiencing a significant increase in these types of cyber incidents, where organisations systems are becoming encrypted and significant disruption is being caused. These types of incidents, specifically in the education sector have been linked to criminal groups.

Accordingly, we have notified the Information Commissioner's Office [ICO] of the incident and the police as these types of incidents are considered criminal matters We have also notified the Department for Education and the Local Authority including the Local Authority Designated Officer in charge of safeguarding.

Since identifying the issue we have engaged specialist third party experts, with the assistance of our insurer to assist with minimising disruption. It is not possible to put a precise timeline on how long it will take to rebuild the system. External specialists suggest that seven to ten working days is the best estimate. A priority of the investigation will also be understanding precisely what data may have been impacted.

This incident has caused some delay in allowing the Trust to confirm amongst other things, Year 9 option choices, complete Year 10 grade sheets and finalise the 2022-2023 timetable for all pupils/students and staff for distribution.

Once our backup process is completed, we will work to retrieve any of the most recent data uploaded including some pupils' details relating to options, year-end assessments and timetabling.

The Trust will work very hard to overcome the challenges that the incident has created.

Our expectation is that the rebuild will NOT impact on the issuing of public examination results in August. We will inform the examination boards of the cyber-attack formally this week and will work with them to agree an alternative solution to issuing pupils and students results, should this be necessary.

As a result of this incident, the staff have had limited access to their emails and we are unable to use the telephone lines. We suggest that as a precaution that you remain vigilant to any emails you receive and do not click on any links within these emails. We ask that you limit your email contact with the Trust, until such time that the Trust notifies you further that the network has been completely contained and rebuilt.

Investigation and incident response

We are taking this incident very seriously and have launched a full investigation. We wanted to share with you some of the steps we are taking to respond to this situation. Together with external cyber security specialists, we are working on two key areas:

- ❖ Rebuilding the parts of our IT system that have been impacted
- ❖ A forensic investigation to understand whether any data may have been impacted, and if so, what data that might be.

We have been told that timescales for both areas may take some time - but obviously we are working as quickly as we can and putting in place temporary solutions wherever possible.

We understand there may be concerns about whether any pupil/student data has been impacted. While we don't have firm answers to these questions at the moment, this is our number one priority of the ongoing investigations.

We have been advised by our external advisors that in these types of incidents it is possible that the group responsible may have attempted to take some data from our systems and they are working to understand whether that may have happened here as a priority. We are monitoring the situation closely and will keep you updated.

Grade Sheets, Options and Timetables

We understand you may have some concerns about possible delays to grade sheets, option outcomes and timetables being distributed. However, we are making progress with restoring our systems and integrating temporary workarounds where possible. The release of this information remains a key priority and we are continuing to work towards our anticipated schedule.

Going forward, we will continue to keep you updated as both the investigation and rebuild, progress. If you have any questions, please contact the dedicated telephone line we have set up: **07761 236684**. The phone will be answered by **Sallie Blair**. The above telephone number will be answered during the following times: **Wednesday 27th July - Friday 29th July 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.**

If Ms. Blair is unable to take your call for any reason, please leave your name and your telephone number and she will return your call as soon as possible thereafter.

I'd like to thank you all for your patience and understanding and I will update you again soon.

Yours sincerely



Michael Gleeson
Executive Principal
Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Academy Trust operates:
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