

WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

Monday 23rd March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

The Prime Minister has just made a statement saying “you must stay at home”, meaning British people can only leave their home for very limited purposes, including travelling to and from home, but only where this is absolutely necessary. We will send a separate communication when we understand what this means in keeping the school open for the children of key workers and other vulnerable children.

Today, seventeen children were in school; we were expecting twenty-two pupils. When we checked with the five families whose children had not arrived, we were really pleased to learn that all of them had been able to make alternative arrangements. **Thank you so much for the accurate completion of our survey.** Numbers in other local schools were much lower than they anticipated: this reflects the national situation. Our seventeen children in school all said they had enjoyed their day and several told us how much more work they had completed than on a normal day!

Meals were prepared for all learners eligible for free school meals; no children came to the school to collect food, although a few families had indicated they planned for their children to do so. We delivered meals to some children in other villages where this had been requested. We hope that our food parcels for free school meal families will be ready for distribution by the end of this week.

In terms of the 1400 Wootton Academy Trust learners who started **Distance Learning** today, we know that many faced considerable challenges, given the millions attempting to access *Show My Homework* and *GCSEpod* and other platforms. We believe this will settle down; other platforms and websites are being developed to support learning. If your children struggled today, we hope they used their initiative and looked at other sites such as the BBC's GCSE Bitesize. Overtime we know that some students will complete work outside of the traditional school day, either earlier, or more likely, later in the day.

We will monitor when learners are logging-on each day and the time they access work. We have decided to ask form tutors and pastoral tutors to review when pupils and students are accessing learning, Tutors will communicate directly with pupils and students by email on a **weekly** basis. Pupils and students will be asked to respond to these emails. Initially, we will focus on those learners who appear not to be logging-on and completing work. [**Big Brother** is watching!] This should enable us to keep in touch with all our learners, and enable them to let us know how they are. Where form and pastoral tutors have concerns, we have asked them to pass these concerns to senior, pastoral support and safeguarding staff.

Our Teaching and Learning Team, as well as Subject Leaders, and other teachers will monitor the **quality of work** learners are completing. **Over time we want to celebrate wherever learners are doing great work.** Today we know that many teachers have been responding to learners' emails requesting help; Mr Frazer has told me he has seen many really positive interactions taking place.

We were really pleased when we drove around the villages during the school day that we saw very few pupils and learners outside. **Thank you for your support in encouraging your children to stay indoors.** However, I did raise a smile when I was told that we did this using one of the Trust minibuses!

Today, a few parents/carers telephoned to find out when or how they can collect the books for their children. There is no right answer to this question, as we seeking to minimize the number of people in school. We will respond to individual requests as we get them. We will prioritize coursework folders which learners need to complete work which will form part of the evidence base for GCSE/A level & BTEC.

In terms of pupils submitting work they have written by hand, we know that pupils are really good with social media platforms, but less adept when using “old technology”, namely photographing their work and then emailing it to their teacher.

Young Carers

We know that some of our pupils and learners are Young Carers; Mrs Laura Thomas, was their key point of contact until the end of the autumn term. **Mrs Lisa Gabriel, EWO and Attendance Officer**, has taken on this role. Today, we received an email from Jo Sanctuary, Carers in Bedfordshire lead which we reproduce below.

To whom it may concern,

I email you in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing in place. Carers in Bedfordshire is committed to providing continued support to young carers and will be providing an increase in telephone support to young carers and their families. Regular information will be posted on social media and the website.

Please inform any young carers you talk to of this and please encourage any young carers you know of who are not registered with us to do so via the online referral form <https://www.carersinbeds.org.uk/help-for-carers/register-with-us> or you can do this for them.

Please email Young.team@carersinbeds.org.uk with any queries. As I'm sure you appreciate, this could be an extremely worrying and difficult time for young carers and their families, particularly if they have to self-isolate or if they are unable to attend school.

I would like to request that you look at emergency planning and self-care with any young carers you work with. You are no doubt aware that Young Carers have been named in the group of potentially vulnerable children in the government guidance for who will still be able to go to school. Thank you

Jo Sanctuary, Young Carers Team Lead

Next steps

Now that our Distance Learning Programme is in place, we plan to turn our minds to reviewing the Trust calendar in terms of planned trips, events, so we can inform of our plans you as soon as possible. Please be patient: we know you will appreciate early decisions. We sent out a letter last week to parents/carers of Year 8 pupils letting them know tomorrow night's New Intake Evening was cancelled. One or two parents/carers must have missed that letter as we have had telephone calls today to ask whether the event is on. We will be putting information on our website very shortly about options and what the Year 8 children and yourselves need to do.

At the same time, when we receive further information as to what we are required to do, in terms of providing information to the examination boards on estimated/predicted grades we will update you on this too.

We are attaching an updated schedule of work for Sixth Form students.

Finally, some parents/carers have asked us to develop a section on our Kimberley College and Wootton Upper School websites where we put all information related to the Coronavirus. Mr Freemantle is working on that now and we will have it in place shortly.

Thank you for your ideas and suggestions. Please keep safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Michael Gleeson
Executive Principal
Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Academy Trust operates:
Wootton Upper School & Arts College
Kimberley 16-19 STEM College
Registered in England and Wales
Company No. 7740758

Wootton Academy Trust
Hall End Road, Wootton
Bedford, MK43 9HT.
01234 767123
Email: wootton@wootton.beds.sch.uk
www.woottonupper.co.uk
www.kimberleycollege.co.uk

