

Monday 20 April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Happy Birthday to HM Queen

Tomorrow is April 21st; it marks the ninety-fourth birthday of Her Majesty the Queen. A hugely respected and admired monarch whose words from Windsor Castle just over two weeks ago struck a chord with many around the world. It is the more remarkable when you think that eighty years ago she spoke to the world as a fourteen-year-old during the early stages of the Second World War. The Queen is now the world's longest serving Head of State, having been Queen for more than sixth-eight years. Happy Birthday from all of us!

Return to school and college?

Yesterday's *The Sunday Times* and other papers included articles suggesting there may be a partial return to school for some pupils as early as May 11th with primary school pupils and students in Year 10 and Year 12 being the first to return. During the Downing Street Press Conference yesterday, Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education said no decision had been taken yet, and the five tests the government has set for ending lockdown need to be met first of all. He commented on government's concern for the most vulnerable children and a plan to provide IT support for these children if they will be sitting public examinations next year. He also stated that there would be a need to plan for an orderly return giving parents/carers and schools sufficient time to prepare for the return.

The Senior Leadership Team has started to plan which events can safely take place when we re-open, given the likely on-going requirement for maintaining social distancing, even though the Secretary of State indicated he could not see how this would work with young children.

Centre Assessed Grades

Today the Senior Leadership Team briefed Heads of Department on the process to be followed to determine the estimated centre assessed grades for each learner which the school and college will submit to the examination boards. You will recall from an earlier newsletter that **schools and college are prohibited from sharing these grades with children or parents/carers**. There have been some changes to the proposals initially published on April 3rd.

On April 7th I wrote to Ofqual to express my concern that children in Years 9 and 10 could not be entered for examinations this summer. **This would have had a serious implication for Wootton Upper School as all Year 10 pupils have been entered for their CiDA examination.** Ofqual has re-considered this point, in light of a number of letters senior leaders and others, have written; it is now proposing that children in younger year groups **may be entered** this year. Ofqual is running a consultation on all of its proposals which anybody is able to submit a response. I have submitted a response on behalf of the Trust and will encourage others to send their personal responses.

Dr Mackay has suggested that parents/carers and students might like to view an Ofqual video "*Grading in 2020 - information for students*" which reinforces some of key points and offers another medium to receive the information. The link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXuDOrtJY1Q&feature=youtu.be>

Results Days confirmed

The exam boards had indicated in March that GCSE and A level results *could* be published in July. They have now confirmed that examination results will be published in August on the original planned dates:

- ❖ **A Level and BTEC National** **Thursday 13 August**
- ❖ **GCSE, CiDA and BTEC First** **Thursday 20 August**

It is our practice to release all exam results at Kimberley partly because of the size of the car park. We will provide more details nearer the time.

Letter of introduction from Mr McInerney, new Joint Year 9 Leader

Dear Parents/Carers,

I write to introduce myself as your child's new joint Year 9 Leader. I join this summer term to work alongside the amazing pastoral team in order to support the students at Wootton grow into thoughtful, well rounded and down to earth individuals.

Change is inevitable in all walks of life and as a teacher I look forward to the opportunity I now have to further support your children to thrive.

The changes we have all had to go through during this uneasy time have not been simple, but please be assured that I aim to do all I can to support your child's education and well-being going forward. As part of the Pastoral Team I will be contacting some parents/carers of Year 9 pupils and the pupils themselves, so I can get to know you and work with you to ensure you feel supported during this time of unease and to ensure your children are prepared to return to school once the government announces that schools may reopen.

I strongly believe in the values of Wootton Upper School and will strive to ensure all students are supported in their pursuit for excellence. I aim to champion the pupils' achievements, both academically and on a personal level.

When pupils need care, along with their form tutors, I will be there also to give a helping hand and aim to develop strong, positive relationships with all pupils at Wootton.

Finally, I will make clear our expectations of excellence here at WAT as without excellent attitudes to learning and personal development pupils will struggle to achieve their full potential.

I look forward to speaking with you all in the future and working closely with your son or daughter.

If you require any further support please do not hesitate to contact me via email at jmcinerney@wootton.beds.sch.uk

Kind regards

Mr McInerney

Joint Year 9 Leader

Recruitment of Teaching Staff for 2020

Earlier today, I emailed a letter to Wootton Upper School Year 9 parents and carers to update our progress on recruiting staff for September. A copy of this letter is on our website. To date we have appointed ten staff for September, six before Lockdown and four by video conference in the last three weeks. However, we are finding it very difficult to fill some other vacancies, notably in **Business Studies, Science, Modern Foreign Languages** and **Food Technology**. In my letter to Year 9 parents/carers I have explained that this may limit our ability to offer one or two subjects to GCSE in September, notably Business Studies.

All schools and colleges are faced with huge challenges to recruit great teachers. In common with other schools, we seek to grow our own teachers, either by welcoming back former pupils after they have completed their undergraduate and/or master degree courses, or by working with local Teacher Training providers to train and then recruit staff.

If you have older children who are finishing their university courses this year who might like to train to be secondary school teachers, please do get in touch with me. Similarly, if you have friends with older children in this situation do encourage them to get in touch. I would be very grateful for any support you may be able to provide.

Show My Homework – work for week beginning April 20 and April 27th

Today, work this week has been uploaded to **Show My Homework**. A summary of all the work set is being sent with evening's newsletter and will also be available on our websites, shortly.

Mr Frazer, Dr Mackay and Mr Detheridge held a video conference meeting with middle leaders this afternoon to determine with Heads of Department how best to implement the views put forward in the survey in respect of grouping work into smaller tasks, putting time to be spent on each task, providing a variety of options for completing the task and putting in place a system whereby pupils can email their teachers at a given time and expect a fast response. It will take us a little time to implement these ideas. We will update you soon.

Show My Homework Data for today

Dr MacKay and Mr Frazer are delighted at our learners' engagement with the work at the start of this half term. Over 80% of Year 9, 10 and 12 have logged in to receive their work for this week. The work being completed this week will develop their knowledge and understanding in areas of the curriculum yet to be covered. These will be revisited when the learners return to school. As we are now into a new phase of our learning, the data shared in the tables below will, from now on, reflect those who have logged in since 20 April.

Wootton Upper School	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total School
Logged in within the 24-hour period up to 4pm Monday 20 April	82%	81%	50%	72%
Pupils logged in Monday 13 April up to 4pm Monday 20 April	92%	92%	74%	86%

Kimberley College	Y12	Y13	Total College
Logged in within the 24-hour period up to 4pm Monday 20 April	87%	75%	81%
Pupils logged in Monday 13 April up to 4pm Monday 20 April	91%	84%	88%

Children in our schools today

Now the summer term has started all the schools in the area have seen a big increase in the number of children attending. In total **87** children were in our schools. At Wootton Upper School we welcomed nine pupils today. Children allowed to attend school at the moment are vulnerable and/or children of key workers.

Don't forget to look at our latest:

- ❖ Assembly <https://www.woottonupper.co.uk/distance-assemblies>
- ❖ Students Bulletin: : <https://bit.ly/2Kj3Phn>

Thanks to Mrs Ashton [and Mrs Holmes] for the assembly last week on Passover, Easter and Ramadan and to Mr Stewart for this week's assembly on "Broadening Your Horizons"

Connolly Foundation Bursary Applications A Further Update – Mrs Ashby

We are approaching the deadline for submitting applications; this week teachers will be writing references to support the fifty applications that have been submitted. Forty-one of these are for the Main Award and nine for the Discretionary Award Main Award. There are a few students where Mrs Ashby has recommended some amendments to their applications (*as they did not submit an early draft before the deadline*); Mrs Ashby will continue to chase these up this week.

Disneyland Paris Trips

We are planning to send an update letter later this week in respect of the Disneyland Paris Trips. Over the holiday we have been in contact with the tour operator and others.

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
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