

Wednesday 25th March 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

RE: Weekly update

You may be expecting our weekly blog about now, however, our temporary new plan is to send you an email update each Wednesday instead. Once again as Co-Heads we are using our bandwidth so we will take it in turns each week to write the email. That said, as so much was happening last week, it seems right to write this one "blog style".

There are lots of wise words circulating around at the moment. This was one of my favourites over the last couple of days ... Vladimir Lenin said: "There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen." This week has felt like a decade for sure ... it was this time last week that the Prime Minister announced GCSE and A level exams would be cancelled, that schools would be shut and then on Monday that we need to stay at home. At the end of an unprecedented week we want to say thank you to all of our staff, students and parents for responding to the challenge. We couldn't be prouder of how our teachers, students and of course parents are mobilising like we have never seen before and adapting to the changing learning environment. We are literally 'all in this together'.

Communication

Communication is key during these moments.... that we keep in touch and continue to adapt to the changing circumstances so here are a few things we have learnt this week

- Homestudy@holt.wokingham.sch.uk email
Please use this email if you have any queries re IT issues, work being set or anything else. It is monitored between **8:30am and 3:30pm** every week day and we will triage the query and send it on to whoever can resolve the issue. It is better to use this than say emails the HOY ...they may be unwell and we will not be able to reply as we would be unaware of the email.
- If your child is unwell and so cannot do the work set, please email homestudy@holt.wokingham.sch.uk so we can forward to your child's teachers and HoY so they know not to chase work.
- We appreciate there have been teething problems over using IT so intensely – FROG crashed a few times but we are very grateful to our IT team, Monitor, for sorting out the issues so swiftly.
- I learnt about new software to bring people together such as Teams, Houseparty and Zoom...we will soon have booked up Zoom diaries!

Safeguarding

- We are aware that our students will be using the internet a lot more during this period and it would be prudent to remind your daughters about internet safety. The following link might be helpful in guiding you through the conversation of internet safety.
<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>
- If you or your daughter have any safeguarding concerns please email homestudy@holt.wokingham.sch.uk and we will follow up appropriately.



"Reply all" emails

- On Monday teachers were overwhelmed with emails from girls who were clicking on 'reply all' in emails when they didn't need to as they were actually just chit chatting between friends. Please can you remind your child when to 'reply all' i.e. if a whole class discussion and when to just click on 'reply' – a private conversation.

Exams and Assessments

- We sent out an email yesterday explaining that we have not had any more detail on how exam grades will be managed given the cancellation of GCSEs and A levels, apart from they will be set by teachers based on internal data. We will keep you updated.
- We are intending for Year 10 PPE exams to take place, albeit remotely, the week beg 27th April as per timetable. We are just working out how best to roll them out to ensure they are relatively straight forward for teachers to mark.
- Year 7,8 and 9 assessments and Year 12 PPEs all happen after May half term so we intend of them to go ahead but we will work out the best way to manage them following on the Year 10 PPEs.

Mrs Pearce and I were in awe of Year 11 and 13 on Thursday and Friday. They handled their disappointment (for most!) of not taking their GCSEs/A Levels with magnanimity. They were stoic and definitely understanding of the seriousness of the coronavirus situation. Between them, the students organised a leavers assembly...in 24 hours ...normally takes 3 months ...the reflections and musical /dance performances were touching and made for a joyful celebration of the fond memories they have had at The Holt and for many ...memories so far... we are excited to know that many of Year 11 will be returning to the sixth form in September.

Well done also to the Year 11 girls who completed their NEA Food practical soon after the leavers assembly...the food was exquisite - skilfully prepared, cooked and plated. Thanks to Mrs Williams, Mrs Nyazika, Miss Hurry and Miss Vockins for supporting the girls in difficult circumstances...not least that their ingredients were impossible to find due to empty shelves in supermarkets. Mrs Williams worked her magic with supermarket managers and staff kindly donated wholemeal flour, chicken and other fairly basic ingredients.

Here is a link to some guidance we wrote on having teenagers at home – it might be useful.

https://www.holtschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Letters_and_Announcements/Hints%20and%20tips%20on%20having%20teenagers%20in%20a%20lockdown%20house%20-%202018.03.20%20SLT.pdf

More next week from Mrs Pearce. Stay healthy and look after yourself and those around you.

Thanks

Anne Kennedy
Co-Headteacher