



Diary Dates

Entry and exit times
Year 5 – 9:00am – 2:45pm
Year 6 – 8:55am – 2:40pm
Year 7 – 8:50am – 2:35pm
Year 8 – 8:45am – 2:30pm

What a week for all of us! On Sunday night Year 7 and Year 8 were returning on the 18/1/21 and all other students in Tuesday 5/1/21. On Monday morning they were not, and by 8pm Monday evening only key workers/critical worker and the vulnerables were in school with everyone else at home until at least the end of February half term. The Governments plan that all Schools with Secondary children should roll out mass testing, Year 7 and Year 8 would be online learning for two weeks while primary children were expected to attend, had disappeared. By Tuesday, we had identified the students who would attend school and created a 50% timetable, ie 2 classes in each year group operating under the strict COVID-19 social distance restrictions in classrooms.

Reading this back, it has reminded me that Middle Schools do not fit the system, so while Secondary schools were already planning for the Mass Testing, Primary schools were preparing for students to return. We were straddling both camps trying to do it all and I know I felt this strain! After the 8pm Government announcement, I thought I needed to manage your expectations about online learning and live lessons and try to explain our predicament. However, I am really pleased to say that I massively underestimated the capacity, resilience and sheer willpower of my staff to move, train and support an improvement in our online learning as quickly as possible! Since writing to you, what I have found and what we have accomplished:

- The Head of ICT who has been teaching live lessons from Freman College on our request from the outset of September, has already issued and trained all Year 7 and Year 8 students in school during December on how to use Teams and how to use the school's email system. When Mr Rowlands set up a trial year 8 Teams group a Year 8 student had replied within 30 seconds.
 - There was also a plan to introduce Teams to Year 5 & Year 6 students in the first three weeks of this term. We still intend this to happen, but it will take some time due to it being introduced remotely. We trialled this with a 5A in Collective Worship on Friday.
 - A number of staff are desperate to activate using live Teams **and trial** the following **and lead the way in our understanding of how this might work for Edwinstree and a Middle school:**
- 1) An introduction to lessons and getting them started with a 20 minute session, either as a

- 'one off' or in the classroom at the same time as teaching the Key Worker children.
- 2) Whole school Collective Worships to move to live.
 - 3) A catch up with a tutor group or year group during a COWO session at 2:10pm with 'Wellbeing and Friendship' theme. Those in school can 'meet' with those out of school.
 - 4) Rather than asking students to comment and the teacher responds at a set time, we will be offering trial Live Teams chat, so students can access and talk through their learning problems and get direct help from the teacher. A class would be able to access this at a set time if they want to and need to. We think this may be better than the comment process – but let's see.
 - 5) Live enrichment activities and interventions to support learning.

So what are the logistical hoops still to get through?

- Activate Teams for all classes and download all classes.
- Create a protocol for its use (Freman College are supporting us with this).
- Our Network Manager needs to secure a smooth entry into Teams and ensure it is safeguarded. For example, ensuring access is restricted in an appropriate way. Freman College have allowed us to employ and share their Network Manager who has prioritised a roll out at Freman first (key exam groups) and can support us over the next two weeks.
- Train teachers on how to use Teams. All staff will be attending a Staff Inset on Tuesday after school.
- Train Year 5 and Year 6 on Teams, how it operates and catch up students who missed the sessions in Year 7 and Year 8.
- Make sure your child has their Edwinstree email address and their log in.
- Week beginning 18/1/21: we will flag up Live learning in the title of the work we set and post on SMHW.
- Week beginning 11/1/21: we will flag work that includes a video tutorial.

How we managing your expectations of online learning

- **Not all lessons will be online.** A significant part of the timetable may include video tutorials and guide sheets. Once trials are over we will try to increase its use.
- Even in there are live lessons taking place, the sessions are likely to be time limited - 20 minute start and explanations – not a full 2½ hour lesson as we currently operate. This is what other Heads told us they were doing and worked well and which students could sustain.
- As we trial, please be aware that it will be bumpy first, (based on other schools experience), some of you won't connect straight away, others will be on mute, so please recognise we need to make trial mistakes and learn as we go. Actually, it is a really good way of modelling to students how when we

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make errors or find learning hard, we need to pick ourselves up and carry on!

- We know that video use is invaluable in supporting students, as the play and replay option really helps them and we will continue to use this as students like this facility.
- The guide sheets that we publish will remain and, **whether online live or not, students will need to read these carefully** and use them as support so please train them now.

What are our priorities regarding the rapid changes due to COVID-19?

I am currently working two key principles this year to support my decision making, that it is important to keep the welfare of all, including mental health, at the forefront of all our decisions. After a strange Christmas, as staff, we too have been shock this week, so understand many of our students and parents will feel the same. This is traumatic for us all. The second principle is that we are a 'learning centre' and therefore, we will prioritise the quality of learning and support the wellbeing of students over all other activities. The remainder of the newsletter therefore addresses these priorities:

Wellbeing - How to communicate, hear your voice and work together

Please be aware that while we have nothing on the NHS and service workers, this year we have been continually thrown in at the deep end, with very little notice to change the school. We really appreciate your compassion in responding to us with care and concern. I would like to remind you that posting a rant on social media sites may ease your anxiety for a short while, but it has no impact, I am not aware of your concern nor the ability to respond. This week, the most helpful parents have politely shared their views on my decision making and learning, offered suggestions and ways forward. They have done this by emailing admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk marked for my attention. As a Head, I will never profess to get everything right, I am human but I do ask that you treat all my staff with compassion. Let us know the problem, you know we will listen and do our best to support. Thank you to the vast majority of you who communicate in this way.

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for Staff and Students

Prior to Tuesday, as a school with Secondary students we were in the process of carrying out extensive training for the Mass Testing Programme by recruiting volunteers and staff. Since the announcement, we are still awaiting guidance. In the meantime, we have continued to set up training and begin the process in order to test those students and staff in school weekly, and prepare for a positive case so we don't have to send students home and we can test each day for 7 days. This is likely to still be required when students return. Please note, the testing only applies to Year 7 and Year 8. Currently, we not expected to test Year 5 or Year 6 students, however we will test the staff in these year groups.

Please see the attached letter for more information about the testing programme in our school. If you are Year 7 or Year 8, please return the Consent Form for Covid-19 Testing in school and indicate whether you DO or DO NOT give permission for your child to be tested. This will help to avoid having to self-isolate a whole class in the event of a positive COVID case in school. This can also be scanned and returned via admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk

If you're not sure whether symptoms suggest that they have COVID-19 or an everyday cough or cold, you can consult the online NHS symptom checker: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

In school Wellbeing:

Students will receive a weekly morning lesson based around wellbeing, this will continue to be based on Educational Psychology guidance on how to help students grow through trauma. Students will continue to explore how to generate a sense of safety, control, calm, connectedness and hope. Interestingly, this term our behaviour data comparisons from last year to this year show that tracking behaviour and focus has continued to improve despite COVID. With all anti-social cards reduced from this year to last. Students with a worry or concern will be encouraged to speak to their Year Team teachers and or post a note in the Learning Zone box. Parents can also email the Head of Year or a member of the Learning Zone Team to alert them to any issues their child may have. We are currently running trials for Year 8 students and staff to wear masks in and around the school. We will discuss with staff whether we ask all KS3 students to do this. Please can you ensure that your child brings a mask into school, all students will be expected to wear them in corridors and when moving around the site. The morning session on Monday will gently take them through the Science of why this is so important and lean on their value of compassion.

Out of school Wellbeing:

One of our trials with online learning will involve providing regular opportunities, weekly or fortnightly for students in school to connect with those out of school in a Collective Worship and or set Wellbeing activities. We agree with you that it is important we provide interface time with each tutor group to stay connected.

PSHE in Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8 will focus on mental health and how to manage anxiety and worries, we will republish all the helplines and how to access the Learning Zone, who support wellbeing in school.

Year 5 we will post information on the SMHW notice board about meditation techniques and opportunities to manage worries. However, if you have a concern please email admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk and we will respond asap. Please do not hesitate to alert us, there is a lot of support available. We also have access to bereavement counselling if needed.

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The morning wellbeing session Powerpoints, will support students and give them opportunities to develop the sense of safety, control, calm, connectedness, and hope, these will be posted on the SMHW site. Live COWOs will be up and running to support an element of spirituality and reflection.

Information on learning

Whether in school or out, Edwinstree students will continue with their planned curriculum. For the first time in a long time, having rebooted students learning and moved them forward, in December we were able to accurately pitch where every student was for every subjects. You will see that for some students who will return to AT and AB currently they rest at WT and this is the damage restoration that we have to continue to work on and now try to reduce in this next lockdown. Thank goodness SATs will no longer take place, so we can look at a long term view.

One exception: Instead of online lessons for Year 5, we will provide a gentle enrichment programme, which will support students to understand the culture and nature of France with a gentle reminder of the learning that has gone before. Listening to Parents last year and looking at the numbers that continued with French in the summer, this seems the wisest course.

When will you have an opportunity to talk to teachers about the data report if you wish to? We asked you to respond and return forms, but with all the changes, we will now consider a different format for you to arrange a discussion or email contact with a member of staff. Forgive me, but this has not been a priority this week, but this will be addressed.

In school learning:

In order to support the role out of an extensive online learning programme and to build capacity for staff to develop this, we have amended the timetable and students are now clear on the classes they will be attending, on Monday a new timetable will be placed in their room.

As during the first lockdown we feel it is hard for students to come into school while others are at home. Students have asked and we have agreed that they can attend school in non-school uniform while this lockdown is in place. It is also really cold with windows open in every classroom, children can wear extra clothing. On PE days please remind students to bring spare pair of shoes, or trainers with them and make sure their outfit allows them to move and fully take part in a PE lesson.

Online Learning via 'Show my Homework' [SMHW]

Video link to support Y5 students and parents with our expectations of distance learning.

https://youtu.be/RTcDUrMb_8

If you are struggling with you data load and the demand your household is now creating, please see the link which supports you to access more.

<https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/about-increasing-mobile-data>

During the March lockdown, we operated an hourly timetable for all subjects, now, students in school have been experiencing two hourly morning and afternoon sessions and 30 mins to keep teachers in teams and minimise self-isolation to one class and not year groups or more. We think it would be really hard follow this timetable at home, particularly for maths, so we have made the decision to post all learning at the start of the week which allows you and your child to decide when to tackle subjects, as pockets of Live Learning comes on-board they will have some lock in times in the week.

How do I remove old tasks on 'Show My Homework'?

If your child still has tasks appearing on their To Do List from last term, you can remove these by marking them "complete" in the tick box. This will ensure that the To Do List is up to date and manageable for your child.

What did we learn about having all learning posted at the start of the week?

Initially it is daunting but it does create flexibility for you and your child, some students chose to get up early, others with parents decided that depending on the Parent work pattern, they would tackle different subjects on different days. eg. My husband took the languages strain, I took the maths. Once you are up and running this really allows you to plan what is best for you all. But we do not at the start of the week the load can be daunting. Remember wellbeing first, CORE subjects above all and Maths first!

Please actively encourage your child to read the guide sheets, they can't do this work without these, this is the teacher's voice explaining and helping them through the work. Do make sure they access the video tutorials that model what we are asking students to do, these are invaluable. Look out for the title which states VIDEO.

Why are we now doing algebra in Maths?

This is the subject that we have not taught for almost a year, and we cannot put this off any longer. Tutorials with models of how to do this, will be coming your way to support and guide students. Please give this a try but if they struggle, let the teacher know.

Lockdown Timetable

A link to the timetable that students are following in school can be found on our website www.edwinstree.herts.sch.uk Students completing distance learning at home may wish to follow this timetable too, although this may not work for everyone

Jo Gant Headteacher

Mass Testing info

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