



**Diary Dates**

7/9/20	<b>School starts for all students entry times</b> <b>Year 5 – 9:00am – 2:30pm</b> <b>Year 6 – 8:55am – 2:25pm</b> <b>Year 7 – 8:50am – 2:20pm</b> <b>Year 8 – 8:45am – 2:15pm</b>
14/10/20	Flu Immunisation Y5/Y6/Y7
26/10/20	Half Term
2/11/20	Students return to school
4/12/20	Occasional Day
4/01/21	Inset Day
5/01/21	Spring Term begins

**Focus for this newsletter reflections on 4 four weeks living a COVID timetable and the conditions it creates for learning.**

**What do our students think of the current curriculum, timetable and school?**

As we consider the timings of the day and our current COVID safety timetable, we have been asking students to let us know what they think of the measures, and this is what they have told us:

- We understand why these measures were put in place, and realise that although we miss moving around the school, we know why we need to do this. We generally feel safe.
- We find when teachers move at 11:30am it is hard not to have a break.
- We miss the length of break and lunch times that we used to have. The day feels really long.
- It is really hard to pay attention in the lesson for two and a half hours.
- We really miss our other subjects, these were often our favourite subjects that kept us going in the week.
- We are worried that if we don't do these subjects and want to take them at GCSE we will be behind.
- We would much prefer a timetable that had more sessions.
- We really miss a tutor as they know the class and help us.
- We are finding it difficult to not eat until break and lunch as we have got used to eating when we are hungry.
- We miss Justice Friday – can we have some reward for no cards as a class ie we get to use our phones – can we have this as an attendance award?
- The whole day, limited break and long sessions make it hard and we are really tired at the end of it.
- We would wear a mask if it helped.
- We really miss not having a book for each subject, as we can't see our journey clearly in that subject and it is difficult to organise into sections.
- Many of us have forgotten how to use SMHW and we are reluctant to complete homework after the day.

**What are we noticing about teaching in a COVID school? Where are our frustrations?**

Our biggest difficulty currently is our inability to manoeuvre around the classroom to support and manage the class. The COVID guidance leaves us at the front of the class, which means we cannot use the huge amounts of subtle body language to support learning and or interact closely with children to spot errors and correct swiftly. This is also compounded by the fact that any work coming into us, needs to quarantine before marking, and then again before returning to students. All interactive teaching and interventions we would normally use are restricted. The time used for handwashing, sanitising and handing out resources etc., is also really restrictive. It prolongs lesson changeover time that would normally be much speedier.

**How are we learning to combat this?**

This is a completely new way of teaching, and we are working hard to increase and use the following to provide swift feedback to students and interact with us so that we can spot errors and misconceptions:

- Mini white boards, to show the teachers what they have learnt.
- Visualizers and photos of work, that with the child's agreement, can be displayed to the class and peer critiqued.
- Modelling what to do, where mistakes can be made and we are using this heavily to support.
- SMHW to recap core learning and to ensure that this is in their short term memory.
- We are sharing strategies to safely speed up transitions but this cannot reduce safety.

**What changes are we looking to introduce next half term, will we be extending the day?**

Yes – Whichever timetable we adopt, at least 15 minutes will need to be added to the day, increasing learning time in the classroom. Freman College will be finishing at 3pm from the 12<sup>th</sup> October and we will be complimenting this with a 2:45pm finish after half term, when the new timetable is adopted. This should support bus students who will only have a short wait for the buses. Our timings compliment both Layston and Millfield exits.

**How are we maintaining an earlier finish?**

We are clear the biggest threat is social mixing at break and lunchtime and without teacher supervision, this is very difficult for students. We have therefore, reduced the break and lunch time slots. Students going to the park unsupervised at the end of the day is a concern.

**Will we be staying with AM and PM sessions?**

We are consulting with staff whether to move to teaching three teaching sessions in the day. This would allow us to bring back the whole curriculum to the school, but would involve teachers moving into more classes, and mixing more year group bubbles. We are also considering the role of the tutor. Our decision will be based on how great a risk teachers are prepared to take, while balancing their mental wellbeing. Like the students, none of us enjoy the full 2

*As a Christian school we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone.  
As a community we support one another to flourish and live life in all its fullness.*

and a half hour sessions, we think this is too long. We are desperate to return to the broad curriculum, the greatest strength of a middle school. However, we are also managing our own anxiety and concerns about safety. Please note if we make this move, almost all students will have the same core subject teacher [Eng maths science]

### **Will tutors be returning?**

Students really miss their tutor and the Heads of Year are currently receiving the majority of the pastoral burden, despite teachers being in Year Teams. Students seeing a different teacher every day and not having the consistency of one person, is a missing link to stability and reassurance in the school. As we review the timetable, we are looking at whether it is possible to return to this process, but again, this would potentially add additional bubbles to a teacher's timetable increasing their risk.

### **How can you help students with their learning?**

We have noticed that currently, a minority of students are not completing homework regularly. As we reboot the idea that work continues independently of the classroom, despite them having returned to school, please support your child to access SMHW via any of the devices you have at home and access the learning. Please remember, if you have no device whatsoever at home, teachers will provide hard copies. Mrs Heywood is available to support you to access SMHW if you need any help and you can contact her via email on [r.heywood@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk](mailto:r.heywood@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk)

Please make sure your child is reading for at least 20 minutes 5 times a week, actively engage them in discussions about what they are reading and use the Reading Detective to support this work.

### **Distance Learning**

To support the on-going education of our students, if your child is self-isolating or is starting to recover from an illness we are now providing distance learning.

This can be accessed on *Show My Homework*. Distance learning will show up with a **red banner** (as 'Classwork'). Please be aware that only students not at school need to complete this. Please prioritise maths then English and then Science then choose from the other subjects if you feel able. Don't forget home learning should also be completed where possible.

Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to create a learning experience quite as detailed as we did in lockdown as all teachers are fully engaged with students in school. However, we have set up distance learning that matches what students are doing in school or work that will enrich the curriculum.

For those unable of access *Show My Homework*, hard copies will be available on request from Monday PM. Please email [admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk) or telephone 01763-271446 so we can prepare a pack.

### **What do I need to do as a Parent to prepare for possible a lockdown?**

In the event of an outbreak and a year group was sent home to isolate, we would return to the model that we used last

year in Term 2 and Term 3, which has the extended planning you became familiar with. Again, hard copies will be available. As a parent, please make sure that you have access to SHMW and that your child is able to use it. If you are struggling please contact Mrs Heywood on: [r.heywood@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk](mailto:r.heywood@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk)

### **Can you help us keep our school tidy?**

We have requested, that by half term, you are able to provide your child with two pairs of footwear that allows them to remove their outdoor shoes when they come inside school. This will support us to keep the school as clean as possible, throughout the winter months.

Where possible, (we are noting the additional expense) we would like to bring this request forward as we are struggling with the amount of mud and grass coming into the classrooms. While we won't be moaning at your child, from early next week, we will be encouraging them to bring a second pair of shoes and would suggest a small carrier bag to place the second pair in and hung on their peg. I would like to stress that if your child chooses bright trainers or bright slippers for indoors we are not worried. We are just looking to keep the school clean, nobody will be asking what they are wearing on their feet! Anything that stops the mud coming in to school.

We would like to remind you that we are not worried what colour coat your child wears through the winter, as long as it is warm and waterproof. Following on from a Highways Training session two years ago, we changed our policy to encourage bright coats, as it is important for students to be seen by all traffic as they enter and exit the school.

### **Y8 reading and library books.**

We have had some questions about reading books and our Covid-safe procedures for lending books in school this week. To clarify this moving forward, the English department would like to bring your attention to the following points:

1. Core texts and reading journals (Ruby in the Smoke) are to go home and stay at home until complete. They can then be returned and placed in quarantine.
2. Books from the KS3 library have been handed out. These stay in school in students' bags so that all students have a book to read in class.

Many thanks for your support and apologies for any confusion arising from last weeks' message.

Miss Devonshire

**Reminder:** The Sainsbury's car park is free any time of day for 90 minutes, just enter your vehicle registration to produce a free ticket. Please use the car park where possible to ease congestion at the start and end of the school day.

### **Is your child eligible for Free School Meals?**

Circumstances for some families may have changed, to find out if your child is eligible for Free School Meals please see the attached information. If you are eligible, can we please ask that you claim as this supports the school, as well as your family? The school gains a small pot of additional funding for every Pupil Premium child and this is used to

*As a Christian school we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone.*

*As a community we support one another to flourish and live life in all its fullness.*

prioritise our intervention programmes in literacy, numeracy as well as support for home learning for all Pupil Premium students.

### **Attendance - What if my child is ill?**

It is more important than ever that if your child cannot attend school that you inform us via our dedicated attendance email address every morning: [attendance@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk) to report your child absent, or you may leave a telephone message. Please do not use any other apps such as School Gateway or Parentmail. Whatever ill health, we need to know, and particularly if it is one of the 3 symptoms of COVID [high temperature, continuous cough and or loss of taste and/or smell]. If this is the case you must seek a test. This year the emphasis is on staying safe and well and not about chasing you to get your child into school.

### **Year 5 and Year 6 use of mobile phones and the internet warning.**

We are currently discovering students in all years, but in this week particularly, Year 5 and Year 6, who have access to unregulated and age inappropriate sites. Within these sites such as WhatsApp, students are accessing sexually explicit content, homophobic and racist language and all manner of horrors. We will of course contact you if we are aware that your child has access, but we will not be aware of all children. Please can we ask that you place a heavy emphasis on regularly checking your child's internet use, make sure they have privacy settings on all accounts, age inappropriate sites are the most likely to put your child at risk. Please note that <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> is a fantastic website for talking you through how to protect your child and keep them safe. We absolutely recommend it.

### **Something positive with regard to your children and their behaviour inside and outside of school.**

*Simon Maddison the Trading Manager at Sainsbury's in Buntingford contacted the school to pass on his compliments. During the school rush for drinks and snacks our students were asked to queue at the door, due to the volume of customers in the store. They followed instructions and quietly socially distanced in an orderly queue outside the store.*

*Their behaviour was exemplary, he was so impressed that he wanted the school to know so students and parents can be congratulated. He commented that people are quick to criticise children and he felt they deserved the praise!*

### **Menu for students entitled to Free School Meals**

Mon	Sausage or Vegetarian Sausage in a roll
Tue	Tuna or Cheese Wrap
Wed	Pastry Sausage Roll or Pizza Puff
Thu	Ham or Cheese Roll
Fri	Fish Finger Roll or Pizza

### **Jo Gant**

#### **Headteacher**

Free School Meals

Millfield School Tour

*As a Christian school we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone.  
As a community we support one another to flourish and live life in all its fullness.*