

Dear Parent/Carer

Can we first thank you and congratulate you on the tremendous support you have given your child over the last 7 weeks in order to support their learning at home. The work we are seeing returned via quizzes and or assessment is telling us that they are making progress, which is fantastic. We are so pleased they are showing you the resilience they show us in the classroom, to tackle something challenging. We hope you are impressed with their commitment to learning and their capacity.

However, can we please remind you we are fully aware and experiencing ourselves, how challenging some weeks can be during these times? The wellbeing and mental health of both student and parent comes first. If this is poor, focus on supporting them through a downtime and don't worry if you can't get them to work. When they recover remember, maths first, English, science and all else is a bonus! Please make sure that your child takes a well-deserved break next week and take time out as a family but we would love them to continue to read for 20 minutes a day.

What help and guidance is out there for the strange times that we are dealing with?

Herts County have been excellent at providing links to some really great resources. Here are a few that we thought might be helpful:

Attached is a prevent leaflet which has lots of advice about how to stay safe online, but there are also lots of links and support to help students detect fact from fiction. There have been a growing number of cases of hoax news and advice scaring not only adults, but children. These resources are excellent for tackling this. Please also be aware that the computing certificates the students are earning in ICT also have a lesson on this.

A second attachment from Hertfordshire Local Authority outlines lots of websites and online courses for students and families on how to stay mentally well. Below I have highlight two of my favourites from a first look, but explore them all:

You may consider the ThinkNinja app: As a direct response to the COVID-19 situation, Healios have updated ThinkNinja with specific COVID-19 content. This will bring self-help knowledge and skills to children and young people (10-18 years old) who may be experiencing increased anxiety and stress during the current situation.

<https://www.healios.org.uk/services/thinkninja1>

Young Minds is the UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health. On this web page you will find lots of information about how to look after your mental health at this time

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>

What is the latest Government advice and will you definitely be open to Year 6?

We have the model ready to return, staff are in agreement that the model best fits the needs of our whole community, however, we still have a few hoops to jump through before returning.

- The first is the check on the 28th May by the Government that the 5 conditions have been met.
- Second, the Unions are currently advising many staff not to return. They will have to make a decision toward the end of next week what they intend to do. At the moment, staff are indicating that they support the model but this could change. Please be aware, like parents and carers we all have difficult decisions to make.
- We are also planning to operate a school with very little capacity to cover absence, as we have a number of staff sheilding, due to long term conditions. We will now be teaching more classes with less staff, so again this will factor into our capacity at the start of next term and ongoing.

In light of this, we will email you an update of the planned go ahead on Friday 29/5/20 and I will also take the unusual step of emailing again on Sunday to confirm our position. However, please have a back-up plan in place in case we are unable to open.

Rest assured that whatever happens, our online service will continue after half term, but if you usually pick up homework packs, please wait until Tuesday to collect! Thank you! We will also continue to operate the school for students of keyworkers and our vulnerable students unless we have a Covid-19 outbreak within the school.

I have heard that school may be open in the Summer holidays is this true?

Please can I stress that we have received no advice from the Government to continue to remain open during the summer holidays. There are two reasons that will make this difficult for the Government as they would have to pay LSAs, who are not currently paid for holidays, which is a significant national expense. There is a law that dictates the number of hours teachers work. You also need to be aware that major works will be taking place, a new boiler with extensive underground pipe work, computer cabling across the school. This was delayed at Easter, but we plan to go ahead during the summer break. This also makes it impossible for the school to be used for a number of weeks. Please seek alternative summer childcare arrangements.

My child is really upset that you made the decision not to open for them?

I am sorry to hear this, and although this won't heal their upset, I thought it was important that I wrote to them to explain where the decision came from, the rationale behind it and how proud we are of them and the work they are doing. Attached here is their letter. We hope you will share this with them as all our children are important.

If my child is already in school, what will change from 1st June 2020?

We hope that you have read the information letter sent on 20th May 2020, and are aware that the timings of the school day are changing to **8:45 to 2pm** which the coach companies will support. As from the 1st June students will be separated into three classes to complete their learning. Where they have had the freedom to roam the field at break and lunch time or use the hall, they will now follow the same regime as the remainder of Year 6, with a designated area for breaks and lunchtimes. Keyworkers and parents of vulnerable students will receive a separate letter outlining how they enter the school, their field meeting point and designated play area.

Students will feel the difference as we tighten procedures, and as more students return to school, their freedom will reduce, but we have already discussed this with them. They can continue in non-uniform and bring their phones to school. Please praise your child for their commitment to learning, they have been a pleasure to work with.

I wish you some respite and peace over the next week, and thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Jo Gant
Headteacher

Enc Advice on mental health
Advice on illness at school

Edwinstree Middle School

Voluntary Controlled Church of England School



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