



Edwinstree Middle School
A Voluntary Controlled Church of England School
NEWSLETTER for PARENTS & CARERS
Week Ending: 24/4/20

Diary Dates

5/5/20	Y5 Drop-in Parents' Evening postponed
8/5/20	Bank Holiday VE Day Anniversary
11-15/5/20	SATS – cancelled
22/5/20	School breaks for half term – 3:20pm
25-29/5/20	Half Term
26/6/20	Inset Day
13-16/7/20	Y6 Residential visit to Norfolk - TBC
17/7/20	End of Term 1:20pm finish

I would like to thank you all for the amazing effort you have made in supporting your child and the school, to move your child's learning forward. We appreciate your care and concern for staff and that you have taken a really compassionate approach to all forms of communication with us, despite the immense strain you must be under. We are all on a steep learning curve, with this new learning, we generally want to help and support you all, please don't hesitate to contact us if you are struggling or need to talk.

Please remember, if you are experiencing technical problems, contact Mrs Heywood via email on r.heywood@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk. However, if you have subject specific problems, please post your comment or query via the "Show my Homework" comment link, which will send a link to alert the teacher to respond. Many teachers are responding swiftly and the attached timetable shows you their specific allotted time during the week where they have scheduled time to do this. If you have a general enquiry or a real plea for help please email: admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk and I will respond.

Our weekly Newsletter has become an even more crucial element of communication with you, as there is now so much information to share. I will try to focus on one key issue each week and then respond to any queries you may have. I will also continue to update you with any relevant information from the DFE and County. Our main focus this week is to support you with the Distance Learning at home. I will also send your child a Student Newsletter via your email address for your each week.

How to stay safe on line - Online Safety Reminder

Please be aware that our internet use has increased significantly over this period of time and County and the DFE have rightly asked us to keep you up to date with online safety. Your child's PSHE programme will address this, alongside supporting your children to build their mindfulness and ability to manage any anxiety. Below is the latest advice from County to help you check you are all keeping safe.

The first advice is based around if in the crisis, you have secured an online tutor, it is paramount they have provided you with evidence they have been approved to work with children. Just like a teacher in school, they should have a DBS, which is a criminal record check to show you. We also recommend taking up references.

Websites that give really accessible guidance on how to check your children stay safe online are listed below:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

What went on in the holidays?

The school remained open and on a rota basis, two members of staff were in school to support the students of our amazing keyworkers, who continued to work throughout the lockdown. Students engaged in fun activities based around their subjects 'Rocket Day' and French cooking were highly rated! During this time, our teaching staff committed a significant amount of time preparing learning for your children. Over the holidays, we made the deliberate decision not to post the work on our website, as we wanted parents and students to have a break. We also wanted to make sure when the work was available on the website, we were able answer your queries straight away. In hindsight, I now realise that you received information overload and the joy of lots of 'notifications' on the first Monday back. Hopefully you received the Parentmail about how to remove the notifications and we have attached the information again.

What work is coming and how do you manage it as a family?

The school is clear that we remain committed to supporting your child to complete serious learning. We continue to advise students to complete what they can, but Maths, English and Science always come first, but the wellbeing of you and your child is the most important. Give yourself a huge well done as a family team if you are managing to do this. Everything else remains bonus – but please don't forget the importance of reading 5 times a week for 20 minutes.

Why did we commit to supporting students to continue their learning journey at home?

We know that if this term we continued to send you "ticking over" or "fill " exercises, your child's learning would start to go backwards. Parents can see how hard students have been working in school, and we want to stop a reversal of that progress and continue to move them forward in their learning. Students are also highly sensible, they know what "real work" and "not real" work look like. They understand what it feels like to learn. In taking learning at home seriously and committing to producing a quality learning pack, which is linked to their yearly and curriculum plans, we are sending students the clear message. Learning is important, this work is serious, whatever the situation and giving up is not an option, we will never give up on them or their learning.

Why haven't we sent the work on a daily basis so that they follow their old timetable?

We have tried to be as flexible as possible in our approach, to help you as families manage your new way of life. If we expected your child to start at 8:45am and finish at 3:20pm and change from subject to subject hour by hour, we may have set you up to fail. We could stop the flow of learning, when a child has become immersed in a subject or disrupt the balance of supporting your children and potentially continuing your own work.

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We want to give you as many options as possible to plan their timetable of work to suit your family needs and capacity. If you forgive me for using my family as an example let me use us as an example. As a family, by talking about how we are going to managing my daughter's work, my husband's and my own work, we have found out:

- We would all rather get up early because we wake with the sun, complete the work and finish early (still working on this for me!).
- We want to get Maths, English and Science done in the early morning and spread this learning over 4 days, then in the later slots of the morning and on Friday we will complete the subjects she loves most
- My husband is the language expert, so they complete this work on the days I am not at home!
- All of us can only cope with the Maths puzzle on Saturday morning!
- We are going to celebrate if we get Maths, English and Science completed each week. We are not stressing about the other subjects but seeing them as enrichment.

We are by no means a perfect family, this has just been used as an example to describe how our family system supports flexibility, and allows you to design your own timetable. I am fully aware that I only have one child and a husband to help and I am aware that some of you are in very different situations. Please can we stress any work you manage with your child is a positive.

To manage their work we recommend you agree as family **the following:**

- What work they are going to complete? Maths, then English, then Science.
- When they are going to complete it? Set a visual timetable
- Where they are going to complete it?
- Who is there to help and when?
- Who is going to start them off in the morning and check what they have done?
- Are they going to use "Show my Homework" or the hard copies, they are both the same?
- When they are taking breaks and what these look like?

No two timetables will look the same – make sure it suits your family need.

What have we learnt from the first week that will help you to help them?

Please remember that up until five days before the end of the holidays, Edwinstree school had never used "Show my Homework" and staff were only trained during the last week of term, so like you we are on a steep learning curve! Prior to setting the work for a year group, we have been using parents and students who volunteered as guinea pigs, to test out the work throughout the holidays. We will continue to use them to give us feedback. Creating learning when we are not there is challenging, we are trying to support students by using mini video clips to model what we want students to do, model answers and answer sheets to help them.

The top tips we have learnt that will help you make the most out of the learning are

- 1) Hard copy or "Show my Homework" app is the same work being set. There is no better way to access the learning as both will work.
- 2) Each subject **has a guide sheet**, which summarises the work and gives **you a step by step guide of what to do and when to look at each resource and video link**, at

the moment many students are racing to the video links, quizzes and resources without reading the Guide. **It is paramount that you read this first** and each subject has one that is attached to the work sent through and looks exactly the same. See attached example

- 3) When your child sets to work, find and read the guide sheet, carefully and follow it exactly.
- 4) **Quizzes should only be completed at the end of the learning.** The quiz is to help the teacher check that the students have understood the learning. **DON'T COMPLETE ANY QUIZ WITHOUT COMPLETING THE LEARNING FIRST** – it is useless and just tells us they didn't know something which we knew already! When we get the quizzes back it acts like questions in a classroom, if students have not understood that is ok, we will choose a different way of teaching and plan to cover the topic again next week.
- 5) If they get stuck, don't battle on – send a query via "Show my Homework" with a comment and the teacher who set the work will respond. Check the timetable attached so you know when the teacher will be available.

Are Parents sharing any helpful advice?

As a school, we are really lucky to have such committed students, parent and carers. You have all been really good at seeking out work and following the guidance with Maths, then English and Science. Some of you have been talking to us via email and a kind parent of a Year 6 student sent this piece of advice:

TIP: I have found it is easier to visualise if I draw up a quick schedule/planner from the listed tasks, and thought this might be something to suggest as part of your update in your newsletter if parents are reporting back that they are struggling to make sense of things. Here is an example of our schedule (of course a person doesn't have to do it in excel) (Note, included in our PE is our quarantine fitness everyday :-)

This timetable is not right and it is not wrong – it is one family agreeing what they are going to do and creating a visual for them all. If they don't stick to it, it is not the end of the work but the timetable manages the stress for the family in thinking "How am I going to get this all done". If anyone else has top tips, please post them on our Facebook page or email via admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk You will very quickly become the expert of "Show my Homework" so please share your learning with us.

SMHW - Food Technology

Week commencing Monday 27th April, the Food Technology department will be uploading cooking activities to 'Show My Homework'. Due to the current situation, we are aware of the difficulty sourcing ingredients etc. so with this in mind, they will run on a two weekly basis with optional tasks. It is important that students are supervised during any cooking activity and that all the Health and Safety video links are watched by the student and supervisor before the activity commences. If you have any queries please contact Mrs Booth or Mrs Van Wyk via admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk

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What is happening with end of term Reports, SATS and how will you measure and report on student progress this term?

Tonight I received the first piece of communication from the DFE about SATs, on first read it advises that official data will not be reported, (unlike GCSE and or A level) and the school will not be held accountable for the SATs as national data will not be collected. More detailed feedback next week. Edwinstree will be publishing reports within the next three weeks, as a summary of the work last term. We are able to complete these fairly accurately as most assessments had been completed prior to the end of term closure. However, the member of staff who produces the termly reports is also our lead administrator for "Show my Homework" which is her priority for the next two weeks. Reports will be emailed to you, similar to the reports ones received in January. Hard copies available on request.

What if we are really struggling and we can't get anything done, even from English, Science and Maths is there anything we can drop?

The work to do now is to set up a place to learn in your home and a timetable of when, **sets you in good stead to continue when students return but have to complete homework.** As they get older through our school and Freman College, the demand for independent work outside of the classroom in your home continues, setting up a routine now, and making sure your child gets used to you being involved in their work and talking about it, is really securing a good future for your child's home learning. The ultimate aim for students at the end of their education, is that they are confident at independently learning and will continue to learn well for the remainder of their life. Don't give up, keep going.

But if you are really struggling:

- Please email the admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk and a member of staff will contact you
- You can drop English and Science, but whatever you do **KEEP MATHS GOING.** This is a linear subject, each topic builds on the next so if they don't complete the work they will fall further and further behind. We will have catch when we get back, but this will knock their confidence.

What about transition for Year 8 and the new year 5s coming up. ?

I will be in contact with Ms Loughran, Head at Freman College to discuss how we manage the process and we will make sure our vulnerable students begin to have access to Freman as we know they are worried. I will also contact the Rib Valley Heads of the first schools to arrange a remote meeting to discuss and plan transition for first schools remotely, if we have to. More information to follow.

What about if my child has a vulnerability or a need how are you supporting me?

The Learning Zone, and SEND team are prioritising the following:

- Are families ok in terms of basics – ie have food vouchers arrived etc?
- How is their mental health and can we support them?
- Are students accessing the learning and how can we provide extra support for the most vulnerable at home?

Since the start of the closure, the Learning Zone team have been in weekly contact with Parents of vulnerable students, students with an EHCP or Exceptional Needs children. This week the PP

students have been contacted to offer additional support to complete work. If you have a concern please email the admin admin@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk and a Senior Leader will respond asap.

Any news on the Normandy refund or the Norfolk trip?

A claim form has gone in for the refund of Normandy money and we are awaiting a response. Year 6 Norfolk, if we cancel now we will not receive a refund, so we will review at half term and wait for further clarity from the Government.

When will children be returning to school?

We have no idea when school will re-open. **The Government will advise us when lockdown is lifted** and I will keep you fully updated. However, we are aware that the school would not be able to operate with all 450 students in at the same time and maintain the social distancing rules. Please be prepared that a return in the summer, if it is asked for, may be gradual with not all year groups in at once. Remote learning is here to stay for the moment.

When will we receive the Free School Meals Government Vouchers?

Like every school, we are currently experiencing problems with the Government website which operates the vouchers. During the holidays the system crashed and it has still not delivered vouchers to everyone. Please be aware this is out of our control. To support families in the meantime, local companies have been donating food for those eligible for Free School Meals to collect as food parcels. We have created a direct link with the Buntingford Food Bank and Buntingford Town Council who can all help. Please make sure you check your email daily for any update from the Government and do not hesitate to get in touch if you need support. We are able to help we will contact you via email, whenever the Government gives us more information.

How to manage anxiety and our mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis?

Follow the link to the new JUSTTALK webpage offering Mental Health and wellbeing support and advice to young people, families and professionals around COVID-19.

<https://www.justtalkherts.org/news/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus.aspx>

If you have a concern please email:

LearningZone@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk

and a member of staff will respond. This week's student newsletter will also provide this email address so students can contact us if they are struggling with their mental health.

What messages do County was us to deliver to you? The national Immunisation Programme

Due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the remainder of the immunisation schedule in schools is now paused until July 2020, the end of this academic year. A catch up programme for all students who missed their immunisations during the temporary suspension will be arranged to run alongside the immunisation schedule for the next academic year commencing in September 2020. Any queries, please contact the Immunisation Team direct on 01727 732062

Hertfordshire Music Service

If your child receives music tuition through Hertfordshire Music Services at school (singing, brass, woodwind, drums, guitar or violin) you may wish to know that the Music Service is working on alternative delivery options for instrumental lessons for the

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summer term. You can follow the regular updates through the Music Service website: <http://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk>

Any other questions this week?

Parents have queried why the private bus companies are charging Parents even when their child is not using the service and why they are not offering a reduced cost. I am sorry but these are private bus companies and I have no jurisdiction over them. I will speak to them on your behalf and report back next week. I can confirm that they are still operating a limited service for keyworker students to attend school.

Thank you for your continued support, stay safe and be kind to each other, we are all in this together.

Jo Gant

Headteacher

Student Helpdesk TT

SMHW Notification info

Example

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