



27th April 2020

Dear Families

Weekly Update: 27th April 2020

I hope that you are managing to keep well under the circumstances and that you are adjusting to the current situation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the beginning of the sixth week of the 'lockdown' and we hope that you are coping with all of the demands that this has brought. We also hope that somehow you have been able to embrace some new, positive habits that persist into the long term.

In this letter there are a number of key pieces of information on the following:

1. The PTA Fundraising Appeal for families in need
2. Home Learning
3. The Parent Survey
4. Advice for parents and carers worried about their child being groomed or radicalised online
5. Support for families with No Recourse to Public Funds
6. Ongoing provision for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable students
7. The awarding of grades for Year 11 and Post-16 students
8. Details of the upcoming newsletter from the Student Leadership Team
9. Communication from school.

The PTA Fundraising Appeal for families in need

We are very grateful for the generosity of everyone who has donated so readily to our campaign to raise funds for some of the most vulnerable students at Sydenham School. You can access the fundraising page at this link: <https://donatemyschool.com/sydenhamschoolpta2170>

We are delighted that we raised over £5000 within 48 hours of going live. The funds raised so far will help us to buy laptops and data packages for some of our students who are most in need. The COVID-19 crisis has hit these families really hard but has also drawn in other families who were previously managing.

The money that we are raising will enable us to:

1. Continue to achieve our deeply rooted drive at Sydenham School to challenge inequality and close the achievement gap between those students who are disadvantaged and their peers. At this point, equal access to technology is an important way of achieving this. We know that the COVID-19 is likely to have increased this educational gap
2. Support those students whose families have suddenly fallen into financial hard times because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



We know that by continuing with our fundraising campaign, we can do so much more. Thank you again for your support of the wonderful students at Sydenham School.

If your family is suffering current financial hardship, or struggling with access to IT, please email Ms Gostling a d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk or complete our Parent Survey at this [link](#) and complete the section on unexpected changes in circumstances.

You may also find it helpful to access the PTA's guide to sources of support for families for a wide range of issues related to the impacts of the pandemic. This is available to download from the [parent information](#) page of our website and links to advice on housing, unemployment and furlough, food, finance, relationship support and medical support.

Home Learning

We are pleased to see that many children are now settling in to a good study routine and that 'learning at home' is enabling them to make good progress. Following your feedback we are working to make improvements to how work is set where we can and with the help of the technology where possible. As well as the resources provided by the school, the government has also launched a platform called BBC Bitesize Daily and the Oak Academy. Please do make use of these with your children and build it into the programme of work that you agree with them over the course of a school week.

Please remember that you or your child can contact a subject teacher via email if you need support with the work set in a particular subject.

You may also find this [parent and carer guide to Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365](#) helpful.

Further answers to frequently asked questions about home learning can be found in the factsheets on our website at these addresses:

For Parents and Carers: <https://www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk/about/information-for-parents-and-families>

For Students: <https://www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk/about/information-for-students>

Parent and Carer Survey:

Your feedback is invaluable in helping us to continue to adapt our provision and meet needs during the closure. Our Parent and Carer survey is open until Wednesday at 5pm. Please complete the survey accessible at this [link](#) to give your feedback on the following:

1. Remote learning
2. Communication from the school
3. Unexpected changes in your family's circumstances resulting in problems for which you may need some support
4. Offers of help for the PTA's appeal to support families in need

Advice for parents and carers worried about their child being groomed or radicalised online:

The closure of schools and colleges has increased the chances of young people falling victim to online radicalisation as screen time has increased. Co-ordinated by **Prevent** the "Let's Talk About It" website



<https://www.itai.info/> is aimed at young and vulnerable people who could be at risk of being groomed by extremist individuals and groups online. There is extensive advice on the website to support parents and children with spotting the signs of online grooming.

If you would like to discuss any concerns you have around grooming or radicalisation online, or indeed any other safeguarding concern for your child or any student that attends Sydenham School please contact Emma Quartey, Assistant Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead, on 07908 277599 during school hours or via email to e.quartey@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk.

Support for families with No Recourse to Public Funds:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the government are temporarily extending free school meal eligibility to include some children of groups who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

These groups are:

- children of Zambrano carers
- children of families with no recourse to public funds with a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights
- children of families receiving support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 **who are also** subject to a no recourse to public funds restriction

These groups are also subject to a maximum household earnings threshold of £7,400 per annum. If you feel that your family meets any of the above criteria, please contact Ms Quartey directly via email at e.quartey@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk.

Ongoing provision for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable students

We continue to be open in partnership with Forest Hill School for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable students. Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Gostling at d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk if you have any questions about this provision.

The awarding of grades for Year 11 and post-16 students

Last week we wrote to families of students in Year 11 and Year 13 about grades. This included more information from the government about the awarding of grades for our Year 11 and post 16 students. School staff are working hard to ensure that we are following government guidelines as well as reaching accurate 'centre-based' judgements in every subject and for every student.

Access to the Ofqual guidance on exam grades can be found at this [link](#) on our website.

Details of the upcoming newsletter from the Student Leadership Team

We are thrilled that our Student Leadership Team have been working with Ms Morrison and Ms Harbon to put together a student-led Student Newsletter. It is heart-warming to see the student body coming together to support each other during this time. Final tweaks are being made to the newsletter at this very moment, and it will be sent out to students this week. It will also be available



to access via this [link](#) on our website. I am sure you will share my gratitude to the students involved and the staff who have supported them.

Communication from the school

We hope that you find this weekly letter from the school sent out every Monday helpful. We hope that you receive these communications directly into your email inbox. It may be that some emails go astray en route to reaching you, so please look carefully in your 'Junk Mail'. Please can you ensure that the school has your up to date contact details either by emailing updates@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk or completing the parent survey at this [link](#) by Wednesday this week.

We have been hugely appreciative of the very kind messages that we have had from many families. Our staff are working incredibly hard to respond to the needs of all the learners in the school. Our staff endeavour to respond to contact from students and families as soon as we can. Please bear in mind that this may not be immediately, as many of our staff are also juggling work and care for young children or other family members at this time. We thank you for ongoing understanding as we all work through this situation together.

I hope that you have a good week ahead and as always, please do take the very best of care.

Yours faithfully

Gloria Lowe
Headteacher