



18th May 2020

Dear Families

Weekly Update: 18th May 2020

We are pleased to be able to write to you again following the letter that we sent to all families on Friday 15th May. In this letter there is information on the following:

1. Plans for the phased reopening of schools
2. Home learning
3. Free school meals - how to apply if your circumstances have changed
4. Ongoing provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable students
5. Mental Health Awareness Week
6. The PTA Fundraising Appeal
7. Inspiring Change Makers Online Summit - Thursday 21 May
8. Performing Arts links
9. Contact with school over half term

1. Plans for the phased reopening of schools

We are working with the Local Authority on the plans for the phased reopening at school. The staff and Governors at Sydenham School want the school to reopen more fully. We know that many of your children are missing school both socially and intellectually. All of our students need to and deserve to be at school. However, as I am sure you are aware, it is essential that any wider opening is done in a way that is safe for students and staff.

It must be noted that the national position regarding the reopening of secondary schools remains somewhat unclear. Any further opening of schools hinges on scientific evidence which is due to be reviewed on 28th May. The proposed approach for Year 10 and Year 12 pupils is more limited than for primary schools, and it is not expected that students will return back full time before the end of the summer term. The Department for Education have informed school leaders that they are developing models on how this might operate, but at the time of writing further details have yet to be shared with schools.

We are therefore working hard ourselves to model multiple scenarios so that we are ready to respond. As we stated in the letter to families last week, the safety of students and staff are our top priority when planning for wider opening. **Tomorrow we will survey the families of students in Year 10 and Year 12.** This is so that we have accurate information for our risk assessments and planning. **Please check your emails and text messages tomorrow and**



ensure you complete this essential survey. We will also write to families in Year 10 and 12 on Friday with a further update.

2. Home learning

We are acutely aware of the fact that the recent government announcements on the reopening of schools mean that most of our students will not be returning to the school site before September. Our staff are therefore continuing to work hard to further refine our approach to home learning. Your ongoing feedback is therefore very much welcomed.

The advice for students and parents on home learning can be found at these links:

[Information for Parents and Carers](#)

[Information for Students](#)

3. Free school meals - how to apply if your circumstances have changed

We are aware that the financial circumstances for some families have changed and that some of you may now be eligible for free school meals. If any of the following applies to you, your child may be eligible:

- Universal Credit with an earnings threshold that does not exceed £7400
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are not entitled to working tax credit and have an annual income, as assessed by HMRC that does not exceed £16,190 .

If you need to apply for free school meals, please follow this link to complete the form online:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals>.

The Local Authority do not directly notify us if your child is eligible, so please let us know when you receive the confirmation. This will help us to speed up the process. If you are eligible your name will be added to the scheme and you will receive the vouchers. If you have any further questions, please contact Ms Wijnberg at e.wijnberg@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk

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



We remain open every day between 10am and 2pm during term time for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable students. If your family is eligible to use this provision but has not yet done so, you can still book your child in. Accurate booking is essential so that we can make provision with our school caterers and staff the provision at a safe level. Booking for the next two school weeks is still open. Please complete the booking form found at this [link](#).

1. You are an essential key worker and you require provision for your child for one or more days over the booking period

OR

2. You have been contacted by a member of Sydenham School staff or your social worker to invite your child to our ongoing provision

If your plan change at all over the next two weeks, please do not hesitate to email Ms Gostling directly at d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk at any point.

5. Mental Health Awareness Week

The mental health and wellbeing of all of our community is a priority at Sydenham. This week is Mental Health Awareness Week. The purpose of the week is to raise awareness of mental health and inspire action to promote the message of good mental health for all.

This year the theme is 'Kindness'. Our Year Learning Coordinators are encouraging students to carry out an act of kindness this week and share this with us. They can do this via social media (with parental permission) using the hashtags #KindnessMatters and #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek or via email to their tutors. Our YLCs have given suggestions for how to be kind to our communities, our families and ourselves during this next week.

The next Living Under Lockdown student newsletter will also have a special focus on kindness. Students will be sharing their ideas on how we can all be kinder to ourselves and each other. If you have not yet read the most recent Living Under Lockdown, you can access it at this [link](#).

6. The PTA Fundraising Appeal:

We are very aware of the needs of our students who do not have adequate IT for home learning. The PTA has done a marvellous job of leading the fundraising to help address this. At the time of writing we have raised over £10,500 to purchase laptops and/or data for these students to use at home. This is as a result of the giving of many both near and far.



We are very grateful to the PTA for their fantastic work and to our families for contributions and for encouraging your own networks to take part and 'give'. If you have yet to donate but still want to, the fundraising page is still open at this [link](#).

7. Inspiring Change Makers Online Summit - Thursday 21 May

This Thursday our students have been invited by Sydenham High School to join them and other GDST schools at the **Inspiring Change Makers Online Summit**.

The Summit includes:

“Over 40 amazing speakers have pledged their support, covering professions such as engineering, journalism, architecture, law, sports, the sciences, technology, finance, charities, fashion, vlogging, well-being, the armed forces, politics - to name a few.

They have all volunteered their time to create free-to-access inspiring TED-style talks, insightful careers-focused presentations, interactive sessions, Q&As, active sessions and much more too. Very simply, students will be able to access a wide range of online videos to choose from - they **will be able to create their own conference day to enjoy from the comfort of their own home**.

You can see the full A-Z line-up of guests here:

<https://www.inspiringfemales.org.uk/inspiring-change-makers-online>

To participate, students should visit this link above before 9am on Thursday 21st May 2020. Please do encourage your child to attend, it will be a very exciting day. For further details, please see the invite to students on our website.

8. Performing Arts Links:

I hope that you and your children have been able to enjoy many of the arts events that are available on line. Our [Information for Students](#) pages include a wide range of links to enjoy.

9. Contact with school over half term:

Please note that it is the half term holiday next week, and so our staff will not be available to respond to emails or telephone messages. We will not set home learning for that week. We



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very much hope that, despite the ongoing unusual circumstances, you get an opportunity to enjoy some time with your family.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact the school via updates@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk if you have any feedback or require any clarification about something in this letter.

Yours faithfully

G. Lowe

Gloria Lowe
Headteacher