

Welcome back to the New Year. We are so sorry that, so soon after sending out plans for the term ahead, we are writing to let you know that they no longer apply. As we seem to have been saying for a while, it promises to be different to any that we have seen before. Nevertheless, we are in a very good position as a school, and can continue to support our pupils and families with great confidence in what we are doing.

The latest move to lockdown, with the need to go back to full remote learning is frustrating, after such a good term before Christmas, but does seem the only possible move, given the current numbers, and unlike the previous lockdowns, this time, we have vaccination underway, and can hopefully start to see a proper way through the pandemic for all. We are ready to help and support all of our learners during the coming weeks, to provide a rich and broad educational experience, and to make sure that everyone is in as good a place as they can be for the return to in school learning later this term.

Start of Term and teaching

For Prep School pupils we will be beginning term on Monday, with a Tutor Period at 8.45am for all students. Tutor periods will be a daily occurrence, and will serve as 'registration' as well, so pupils must log in for those meetings, ready to start the school day. Lessons will follow, and we have taken the decision to again follow the normal school timetable (with slightly revised times that will be communicated in due course), so the first lesson will be at 9am on Monday. Because we are following the timetable, we will also have Saturday morning lessons for Y7/8- we will look to offer a co-curricular optional activity for Y5/6. Stewart House (Pre-prep) will work slightly differently to these timings and Mrs Atkins will be in touch about these. Further details about remote learning for the term ahead will be sent out to you all by the end of the week.

Pastoral care

As well as the daily contact with form tutors/class teachers, Heads of Phase will be leading on the pastoral care for all the pupils in their Phases, and will stay in close contact with all pupils, but particularly those who need the most support. Pastoral care is something that Felsted is rightly known for, and we are determined to provide the best care that we can during this challenging time. Lindsey Page (Wellbeing) and Nigel Little (Chaplaincy) will be supporting and contributing to this important work as well.

Co-curricular provision

We are keen to ensure that we provide a high level of co-curricular provision in all areas during lockdown, with sports sessions for all, and the same vibrancy in music and drama, and many other activities, that we managed to achieve before Christmas. More details about this will follow shortly.

Critical workers' children

With regards to provision for the children of critical workers, we are working on the following guidance from the Government and the Local Authority, who state: 'The purpose of the critical worker only provision is to enable those that are critical to the Covid 19 response to go to work, whilst reducing the number of children in school as much as possible. This is to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. Therefore if it is possible for children to remain at home, they should do so. This includes where parents are working from home.' It is on this basis where we will be able to allocate places for children. Please bear in mind the purpose

of the lockdown and the closure of the school site is to reduce the spread of the virus and keep the number of people (children and staff) in school to an absolute minimum. In order to plan accordingly, we need to know how many places are required. Please let Erika Taunton (prepadmin@felsted.org) know by return if you hope to use this provision. At the very latest, we would need to know by Thursday 7th January.

School fees

Due to the lack of notice, and the lack of information relating to length of the lockdown, we do not feel that it is appropriate or possible to announce any changes to this term's fee levels. Instead, we will look at our costs in relation to this term, the impact on education (and of course boarding), and make appropriate adjustments to the bills for next term. I hope that you will support this approach, and recognise that the school has tried throughout to be fair and proportionate in its approach, offering significant reductions last summer term, well in excess of the costs saved. If anyone faces particular challenges with this term's fees, it is important that you make contact with the Bursar as soon as possible (bursar@felsted.org).

There is much more that will be said in the coming days, as we move towards Felsted At Home '21, but I hope that this information helps you to continue to get ready for the new term. Remote learning is a genuinely collaborative experience, and at its best can help young people to develop independent learning skills, and great resilience. Please do talk to us if you are worried about your child's progress, and do help them to get involved not just in the academic, but also the co-curricular and social elements of their education, as much as possible. While we are confident that we can deliver an excellent online learning experience, we are all looking forward to the time when everyone can be back at Felsted.

All best wishes,

Simon James