



Monday, 11 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Weekly Update – 11 January 2021

I do hope that you are well and that the week that has just gone by was a manageable one. We would like to thank you, once again, for your commitment to ensuring that your children are ready for learning and engaging so well with the online provision that the school has set up. We know that the wider situation has been challenging for some of our families and we are doing our very best to support those families in whatever way we can.

During this 'lockdown' we plan to send out a weekly letter to our families every Monday, which will most likely take the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) as well as some useful updates. We are aware of how much more screen time that most people are having to engage in at present and so we will aim to keep our communications to a reasonable length.

Unlike the last 2 'lockdowns' we also plan to issue the SYD Newsletter twice monthly, beginning on Friday 15th January. This will enable you to keep up with news of many of the additional activities and opportunities that the school continues to offer our students. We hope that you will welcome hearing good news and seeing some of the high quality work that the students are producing.

Of course, none of what has been outlined above would be possible without the sterling work of our school staff who continue to work incredibly hard and deliver a good standard of education. We are enormously grateful to our support and teaching staff in being able to juggle competing personal demands with the professional responsibilities of work. Our staff have given of their own additional time to support with several school wide initiatives including the successful setting up a Mass/Serial Testing Centre on the school site for students and staff. This has been a considerable achievement and I would like to thank Ms Gostling for her excellent leadership of this in-school resource as well as Mr Hiscocks (Senior Science Technician) and Ms Hopkins (First Aid Officer) for their invaluable technical expertise.

Live Lessons

Last week we delivered over 1300 live lessons to our students. These were taught from teachers' kitchen tables, front rooms or from on the school site. We have been overwhelmed by the positive response from students and the commitment of our teachers. In amongst a tumultuous week for everyone, the many kind emails from families about this provision were



very much appreciated. As always, please do contact us if you have any questions about the lessons that are not addressed in the FAQs below.

Mass Testing

After a successful pilot on Friday 8th January, this morning we launched our in-school programme of testing for Covid-19 in our temporarily re-purposed Sports Hall. This has involved lateral flow testing for those staff and students who are currently on the school site. We were exceptionally impressed by the mature attitude of all of the students who took the test; they demonstrated excellent resilience and a clear understanding of the importance of the testing in helping to protect the safety of the entire school community.

In preparation for a wider launch of any testing that schools will be required to do when schools fully return, we will write to all parents and carers on Wednesday 13th January. This letter will include details of the testing, how you give consent and how you can ask any questions you might have. Please check your inbox for this email on Wednesday evening.

If you have contacted Ms Gostling previously to volunteer to help with the testing process, she is going to write to you on Tuesday 12th January with additional details of next steps. If you have not yet done so, but would be keen to volunteer with any roll out of a mass testing programme from after the February half term, please indicate your availability via this [Microsoft Form](#).

Year 12 Parents' Evening

Following our really successful Year 11 Parents' Evening last Wednesday, we are looking forward to meeting Year 12 parents and carers at our Parents' Evening on Thursday this week.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

We are pleased to be working with Parent Engage, which is an organisation by Lewisham Parents, for Lewisham Parents and Carers. They are offering Sydenham School parents and carers a free virtual workshop to learn about resilience and coping strategies to manage anxiety and stress. [Please click here see the leaflet](#). This workshop is to support parents and carers themselves, as well as empowering parents and carers to support their children with their well-being. The workshop is on Friday 22nd January 2021 between 10-12pm in the morning and is of course online. If you would like to attend, please complete this [online booking form](#).



We look forward to continuing to work in active partnership with all of our families, with the aim of securing the very best outcomes in all areas for your children. We wish you all the very best in the days ahead. Please do look after yourselves and each other.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lowe



Frequently Asked Questions – January 2021

How will my child learn online?

Students are continuing to follow their usual school timetable, attending 'live' lessons using Microsoft Teams. Students will receive invitations to their lessons via their Teams calendar and email notifications. Homework will continue to be set on Show My Homework. Students should log on at the start of period 1 and will need to check their school email daily.

We have been very impressed at how well students have been responding to these lessons since the beginning of the Spring term and we are grateful to staff who are working very hard to adapt their lessons for online learning.

Please see the section below on laptops if your child does not have access to a device or Wi-Fi to attend these lessons.

If my child does not have digital or online access at home, how will you support them to access remote education?

We recognise that some students may not have suitable online access at home. We take the following approaches to support those students to access remote education:

- Students who need to loan a laptop because they do not have a device at home, or do not have access to a reliable internet connection, should contact Ms Wijnberg at e.wijnberg@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk. Students in receipt of Free School Meals will be prioritised.
- Students who do not have access to adequate mobile data can complete the form on this link to increase their allowance up until 31/01//21: [Increase Mobile Data Form](#)
- Students requiring printed materials should contact their Year Learning Coordinator.

My child is entitled to Free School Meals. How can I access the vouchers for these?

If your child is eligible for Free School Meals you will be sent vouchers once you have completed this form which can be found on this link [Free School Meal Voucher Claim Form](#). If you have any questions about this, please contact our Director of Resources, Charlotte Finch at c.finch@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk.

Do I need to inform the school if my child tests positive for COVID-19 but has not been in school?



If your child has not been attending school, we do not need to track and trace on their behalf. You should however, still contact the attendance team at attendance@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk to inform them so that we are aware when your child is absent from their lessons online.

What do I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19 and they have been attending school?

If your child does develop COVID-19 symptoms and they have been attending school because they are the child of a Critical Worker, they have a Social Worker or an EHCP, then please inform the school using the covid@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk as usual. Please copy in Ms Gostling (d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk) and Ms Wijnberg (e.wijnberg@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk).

How is my child's attendance to lessons tracked?

The register will continue to be taken for every remote lesson. A text will be sent to parents/carers if your child does not attend. If your child will need to be absent from remote learning please inform the attendance team with the reason: attendance@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk

The Year Learning Co-ordinator for each year group will continue to track the overall attendance of all students in their year group and work with families to support and reward excellent attendance.

How is my child's attendance to school recorded?

All students who are not expected to attend school during this period will have their attendance recorded as an 'X' code and this will not impact their overall attendance figures. All students considered a vulnerable student are expected to be in school. The key professional assigned to that child will work with the family to ensure they attend and complete a Risk Assessment. If the parent/carer chooses for the child not to attend, this will be recorded as a 'C' code, which is an authorised absence.

Where can I find more information on Attendance during the COVID- 19 pandemic?

There is a Sydenham School Attendance Policy Covid -19 addendum which can be found on the school's website.

How will the school keep in contact with my child whilst we are in lockdown?



Our tutors and pastoral team have a rota for calling students over the next few weeks, so they should receive a call from us. We will run weekly assemblies with SLT on Wednesdays during tutor times.

I am concerned about the well-being of my child. Where can I access support for my child?

All staff at Sydenham School have received awareness training in supporting mental health and well-being. In the first instance, you may wish to discuss this matter with your child's tutor who can refer you to a member of our Inclusion Faculty to discuss the most appropriate support.

All our Learning Mentors are Mental Health First Aiders and we are also a partner school with the Lewisham Mental Health Support Team (MHST) which is a part of CAMHS. For Sixth Form students we have commissioned a service from Discover which is part of CAMHS and focuses on students aged 16-19. Please contact the Sixth Form team for more information. We can also make referrals to a range of counselling support services such as Compass or art therapy as well as to our onsite Youth Coach.

What online services do you recommend to support the mental health and well-being of children?

Below is a small selection of some of the online resources we recommend:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/>

<https://www.kooth.com/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

A greater range can be found on our parent/carer directory on the website:

<https://www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk/information/parents-useful-links>

I would like more guidance as a parent/carer to support the well-being of my child. What could I do?

The Mental Health Support Team offer Virtual Coffee Mornings every Thursday and Friday between 10-11am. If you are interested and would like to join please email:

LewishamMHST@slam.nhs.uk

In addition, we have contact ParentEngage, which is a Lewisham parent run organisation which is offering a free online resilience and well-being workshop specifically for Sydenham School parents/carers. There is a workshop running on Friday 22nd January between 10-12pm



in the morning. Please complete the booking form link which can be found in this week's letter.

What should I do if I have any safeguarding concerns about my child or a child that attends Sydenham School?

Please contact Emma Quartey, Assistant Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding and Mental Health Lead, on 07908 277599 during school hours, or send an email to:

e.quartey@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk

How can I find more information about the Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements at this time?

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2020-21 is on the school website. There is a COVID-19 addendum which can also be found on the website.

What should I do if I have any online safety concerns in relation to my child?

If you have any concerns about any online safety issues for your child, please report these to Emma Quartey as above. We have delivered an assembly to students on keeping well online, which also includes what to do if there is any cyberbullying. Please go through this and discuss with your child. The assembly can be found here:

<https://sway.office.com/ON8ltkz6GroNe8I4?ref=Link>

If you would like more information as a parent/carer, the Department for Education has published this guidance with some useful links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

In addition, co-ordinated by Prevent, the "Let's Talk About It" website

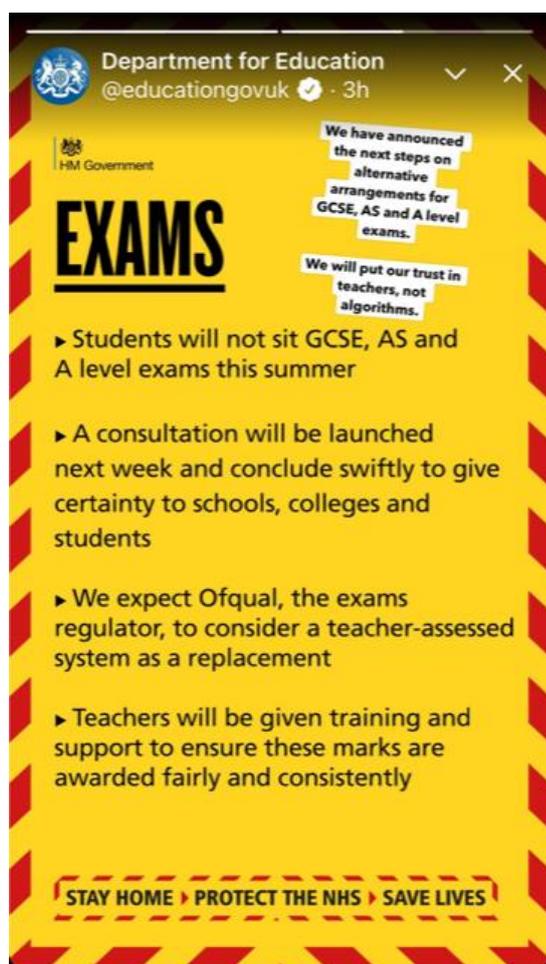
<https://www.ltai.info/>, is aimed at young and vulnerable people who could be at risk of being groomed by extremist individuals and groups online. There will be an assembly for all students in the next few weeks focused on online grooming, which includes extremism.

Have there been any changes to how students apply to University?

UCAS has announced that the deadline to apply for University has been extended to the 29th January. Any student who is intending to send off an application and has not yet done so should contact Ms Pooley. We are delighted that we have already had 97 applications sent off and 80 students have so far received some or all of their offers.

Students who would like some support with applying for apprenticeships should contact our Careers Co-Ordinator, Ms Taylor, f.taylor@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk

How are the Year 11 and Year 13 exam grades going to be awarded this summer?



On 6th January, The Education Secretary confirmed that GCSE and A Level exams would not take place this summer. This was dramatic news.

As a school, we also made the decision not to continue with the BTEC exams scheduled for this month. The government has said that Teacher Assessment will take the place of the exams and we expect to get more detail about what this means following a national consultation period. In the meantime, it is really important that students continue to learn and to make progress, attending their 'live lessons' and completing any coursework. Once we have a clearer understanding of how the Teacher Assessed Grades will be awarded, we will of course give you more information.