



Monday, 25 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Weekly Update – 25th January 2021

I hope that you are well and your families too. It has been another week of what feels like never-ending news headlines related to the pandemic. Some headlines are encouraging, for example the roll out of the corona-virus vaccine, whilst other headlines are obviously more concerning. Please can we all remember to keep a 2 metre distance from other people, always wear a facial covering in public areas, unless you are exempt and wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds each time.

All of the news stories can be quite confusing, as well as hard to take in. As school leaders we know no more than everyone else about what point schools will open more fully. As far as we understand, the government will give all schools a 2 week notice period during which schools will be able to prepare for students to come back to learning on site.

Whenever that point may be, Sydenham School will remain open, as usual, to all of those students who have an EHCP, those who are being supported by a Social Worker or those students who have parents/carers who are 'Critical Workers'. As soon as we have any more news, we will let our families know.

Throughout this uncertainty, our focus as a school community has been to ensure that we continue to offer high quality 'remote learning' and to secure as high levels of engagement as possible with our students. During this 'lockdown' we have been focused on increasing the contact that we make with individual students and their families.

We would like to thank you for all that you are continuing to do to ensure that your children are ready for learning and are taking part in the 'live lessons' that have been so carefully planned by teachers. Please can you ensure that your child is logged onto their TEAMS app for the start of the school day and that they actively participate in every lesson throughout each day. If your child is ill for any reason, please can you contact the school and report their absence following the usual school procedures. [Please find the link here.](#)

Please note that from Tuesday 26th January, there will be a slight change to the length of the second breaktime. This will now begin at 1pm and end at 1:45pm. We have found that there had been too short an amount of time for staff and students to have a proper break and get back to learning and teaching. Over the course of any one week, this will also reduce the daily amount of screen time which we know that we need to be mindful of as a school.



We are aware of the amount of screen time that we are expecting our students and staff to undertake each day and that you too as families have concerns about this. In order to break this up somewhat, please do expect teachers to set tasks during the lesson which allow for independent learning. This enables students to think for themselves and the teacher to support learning in a way that is not 'screen dependent'.

We appreciate all that you are doing to keep your children working hard at home and we do not underestimate how hard it is for many families to be juggling their own work schedules with supervising the remote learning of their children. Please try to use this period of 'lockdown' as an opportunity to strengthen your child's independent learning skills, self-regulation and resourcefulness. As ever, nevertheless, please do contact the school if you need support with any aspects of your child's education.

I would like to thank all of those colleagues who continue to travel into work and to care for the students who are at school. The students at school participate in 'live' learning and log on in the same way that their peers do at home. This is testimony to the improvements that the school has made during the last few months as regards online learning and teaching.

Mental Health and Well-being

We had our first Parent Engage workshop last week which was well attended. Thank you to everyone that participated and I hope you found it useful. We hope to continue our work with Parent Engage and organise another workshop for parents/carers soon. As you will be aware, we work closely with the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) and they are offering a series of bitesize virtual support sessions for parents/carers, the first of which is during the week beginning 25th January. In addition, there is a helpline for parents/carers that you can call with any queries you may have, as well as the continuing Friday virtual coffee mornings. Please find the full details on the flyer [here](#). You can contact the MHST directly at lewishammhst@slam.nhs.uk.

In addition, Children's Mental Health Week starts next week (1st-7th February) and the theme is 'Express Yourself.' Your child will be encouraged to 'express themselves' as a means to supporting their well-being and we will be raising awareness of self-guided strategies for low level anxiety and low mood. The Student Leadership Team will be sharing their thoughts on mental health in the context of the pandemic, as well as launching the 'Listening Project' to help all students to feel heard and ensure that our support at Sydenham School meets the needs of our students. You can also find more information about the week and resources to use at home here: <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/>

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 week 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 are working with ParentEngage, which is a Lewisham parent run organisation which has offered a free online resilience and well-being workshop specifically for Sydenham School parents/carers. We hope to continue to work with them to best support our parents and carers with their own wellbeing and that of their child.

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: <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1610634265/sydenhamlewishamschuk/tbh0wedj1pvz3bxdnv0g/AddendumACovid19SafeguardingarrangementsFINAL.pdf>

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/ON8Itkz6GroNe8l4?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>

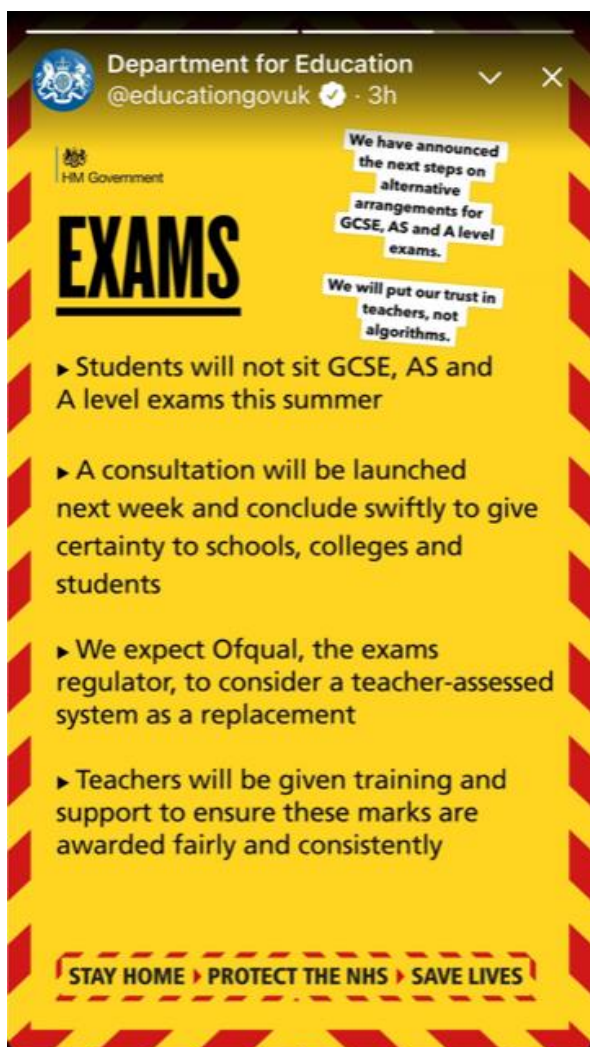
In addition, co-ordinated by Prevent, the “Let’s Talk About It” website <https://www.ltai.info/>, is aimed at young and vulnerable people who could be at risk of being groomed by extremist individuals and groups online. There will be an assembly for all students in the next few weeks focused on online 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.