



Monday, 8 February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that your week has been as positive as possible given the circumstances that we find ourselves in, and that you and your families are managing to stay well. The week beginning 15th of February is the Spring half term week. During that week the school will be fully closed and there will be no 'live' or 'remote' teaching for any of our students.

Also, on Friday 12th January there is a staff training (CPD) day. This will take place throughout the day and will enable staff to collaborate virtually in order to further develop their teaching practice and other skills. This will mean that all students will remain at home and that there will be no 'live' or 'remote' teaching for any of our students on that day either (please see below). The new half term will begin again on Monday 22nd February, when the school site will re-open to those students who have parents/carers who are 'Critical Workers'; or those students who have an EHCP or for those students who have a Social Worker.

We hope that you are able to enjoy some quality time with your families during the half term break at the end of what has been a full 6 weeks. I am sure that you will want to join me in offering a heartfelt 'thank you' to our school staff for all of their hard work during this pandemic. Our teachers and support staff have been flexible, adaptive in their responses to the pandemic and committed to ensuring the best outcomes for all of the students in the school. This has been achieved in the context of many colleagues working from home and managing to 'navigate' all of the competing demands that often go with that. We know that you too are having to manage competing demands. The many emails and cards that you have sent to the school during the last few months thanking staff for all of their work have been happily received and very much appreciated by us all.

When the school returns from the half term break on Monday 22nd February, we hope to have received some clear guidance from the government with details enabling schools to plan for a fuller reopening of their sites to students before the Easter break. We appreciate that this ongoing wait may be frustrating to families, as the government looks to ensure that levels of infection are sufficiently reduced, the NHS will not be overwhelmed and that schools are safe places to return to for greater numbers of students and adults. As soon as we have this information, we will let you know the plans that the school will be working on and will be putting into place.

As you know, the government has introduced a temporary scheme which increases data allowances for mobile phone users on certain networks. This is so that children and young people can access remote education when face-to-face education is disrupted. If you and your



family are continuing to experience internet connection issues, please read the letter and complete the form via this link: [Increasing Mobile Data Offer](#)

Please do try to find as many opportunities as possible to be emotionally connected with your children during 'lockdown' and to praise them whenever you can. As a High Performance Learning (HPL) School our students are already equipped with some of the key skills that will help them to navigate these bumpy times. These skills and attitudes include being open minded, hard working as well as having concern for others. These skills are what your children can draw on now, as well as enable them to be confident that when they do return to learning on site that they will be able to make the readjustment to resuming life in a vibrant school community with their peers and their friends.

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.](#)

We are keen to encourage students to turn their cameras on in lessons where this is possible. This can really help to encourage more active participation in lessons along with a sense of connection with others in the class. Of course, we understand this will not always be possible for many different reasons and so this is not compulsory. Teachers will be using the slide below at the start of lessons to let students know.

Five to
START

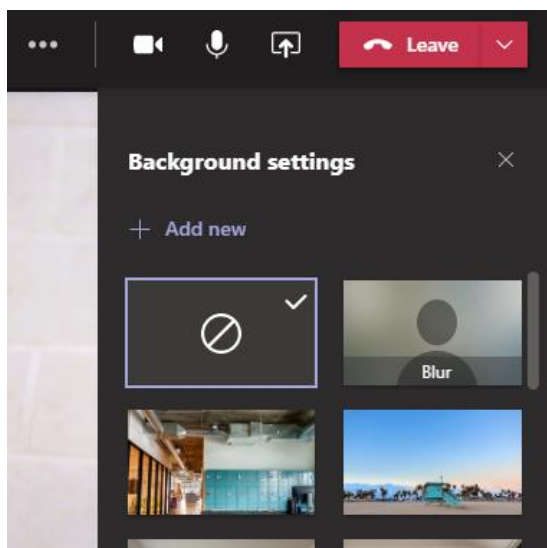
1. **Be Ready to Learn.** Have a pen and your book or paper ready. You may have your camera on if you can using a blurred or appropriate background. Unmute when you are asked to.
2. Show **Concern For Society** by ensuring you do not stop any of your classmates from learning. *(Follow all teacher instructions for use of any of the meeting functions, including the chat and mute buttons.)*
3. Show **Perseverance** by trying even when you find something more difficult, not logging off until the end.
4. Show **Resilience.** **Work** together to overcome difficulties to keep learning. **Join in discussions and participate.**
5. **Aim High** every lesson and you will be rewarded through your learning and progress and the Sydenham Rewards System.



When students do have their cameras on it is important that they follow our protocols which include:



- Wearing appropriate clothes
- Using a neutral and appropriate background (they must not be in a bedroom or have any siblings or other family members in the background). Students may use a blurred or background effect by clicking on the 3 dots on their screen and selecting from the choice of backgrounds.



Please also remind your child that they should turn off any social media apps during lesson time.

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 though, please also do contact the school if you need support with any aspects of your child's learning or well-being.

Children's Mental Health Week

We hope that your child enjoyed Children's Mental Health Week and that they found some useful strategies to support their wellbeing and 'Express Themselves.' The Student Leadership Team launched the Listening Project which aims to give all children a chance to share how the pandemic has affected their wellbeing and that of those they care about. Please encourage your child to take part and share their views.

The Lewisham Mental Health Support Team is also pleased to announce a great competition that your child can get involved in. The service has been thinking about their name and would love to have some input from Sydenham School on that. They are also keen to develop their logo so that it has a direct connection with the children and young people they work with. The competition poster can be found [here](#), and the factsheet on what the Lewisham MHST does is



here. Entries just need to be emailed to LewishamMHST@slam.nhs.uk by **Friday 19th February**. The MHST will then be in contact with any children or young people whose ideas they would like to take forward.

CPD (staff training) Day - Friday 12th February 2021

Here is a reminder that this Friday will be a staff CPD (training) day, which means that your child will not have any lessons on that day. Online lessons will resume on Monday 22nd February. *The school will not be open for the children of Critical Workers or students with a Social Worker or with an EHCP on Friday 12th February.*

Consent for Mass Testing

To ensure we are well prepared for the fuller re-opening of schools, please ensure that you have completed the consent form for mass testing for your child. This gives consent for your child to be tested using lateral flow tests. The consent form can be found at this [link](#) and a letter outlining the details of the testing can be found at this [link](#).

I would like to thank all of those colleagues who continue to travel into work and to supervise the students who are at school, including in these wintry conditions. 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 advances that the school has made during the last few months as regards online learning and teaching.

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 over the half term break. Please do look after yourselves and each other.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lowe



Frequently Asked Questions – Spring Term 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/ON8Itkz6GroNe8I4?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

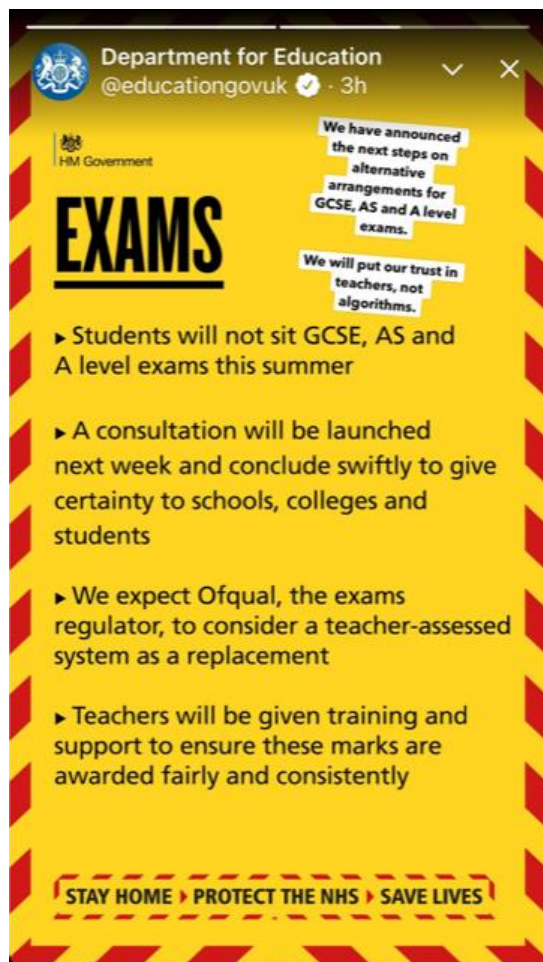
<https://www.ltai.info/>, is aimed at young and vulnerable people who could be at risk of being groomed by extremist individuals and groups online. There will be an assembly for all students in the next few weeks focused on online grooming, which includes extremism.

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.