

5 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the last week of the term I know we are all drawing on our resilience at this time. I hope that in this communication I am able to share some positives on our current circumstance. There is much still to be grateful for and much to celebrate about our community and all that we are managing to achieve.

To that end I attach our second edition of Highlights. Whilst activity on school site is restricted, I am keen that we share a flavour of the many successes of lockdown working; the huge variety of tasks with which students are positively engaged and their determination to find enjoyment and fulfillment in all that they do. To see our students and staff work together in these ways is a great privilege that I do not take for granted.

Clubs

We are planning for ways after half-term that we can get some clubs running virtually through Microsoft Teams. This is being organised as I write, so more news on that next week. We are also making bookings for some motivational speakers and visiting authors, among others, for the week or two after half term. This will also include sessions for parents. Everyone could do with a little bit of something different and it will be a good way to start Term 4 until we hear when we can all be back together at College.

Intervention

We understand natural concerns about students falling behind. Our diagnostic testing in September identified those in need of some extra help and this had been happening in College time throughout Terms 1 and 2. Intervention sessions that were planned for Term 3 have obviously been affected by lockdown but this should not be a long-term consequence. We are establishing Microsoft Teams interventions with tutors and staff known to the College, who would have been running these sessions, to pick up where we left off. We will contact you directly to arrange if this is relevant for your child.

Support

Our pastoral support staff are back in full force and keen to help address any worries or concerns you may have. Please do contact them at an early stage. Equally, staff are very understanding of students being unable to work due to illness or even if they are struggling with technical or other concerns. However, staff do need to know in order to



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take account. Please encourage your son/daughter to contact teachers via Firefly in the first instance to let them know why, if they have not yet completed the work.

For those who have been struggling with motivation at home and are falling behind, we are bringing extra students into College to ensure they are supervised and supported to complete and upload the work and get credit for what they have done. It is in all our interests to work together to ensure students stay on top of their work at this time.

Super-Curriculum

This is a popular form of extra-curricular provision. It will launch next week and be posted to students as a task in Firefly; you will be able to see the launch at the start of the week. Super-Curriculum encourages students to enjoy and experience subjects in a different way to lessons, to see connections between subjects and for Years 9 to 13 continue to learn about subjects they do not study for examination.

These will be the tasks that students will be asked to complete on Friday 12 February, which is a Planning Day for staff, so it will form an interesting entry to the half term.

Survey Feedback

I would also like to thank the large number of you that responded to our survey. We concurrently ran a staff and student survey and will be working to correlate the outcomes of all to similar questions. However, I want to share a few headlines from the parent survey so you can see how your experience sits in the range of responses.

- There was unanimous agreement that students are being set regular work and that this largely follows the school timetable pattern of lessons.
- The vast majority of parents believe their child is spending between 3 to 5 hours working a day, with some more than this. (*We are keen that if you think your child is working far too much or too little that you contact us to explore why this might be*).
- The questions about work and challenge were interesting. Again, the vast majority believe that the College is getting this about right. However, you may be interested to know that the exact same percentage (11%) think that we are setting too much as we believe we are setting too little.
- It is reassuring that 96% of parents have felt they have been able to get help when they needed it, or have not needed any help. *For the 4% who have not we will be following up individually to make sure we understand.*

I was also gratified by the level of honesty shown by respondents when reflecting. In the week where we encouraged emotional awareness, many reflected on the personal challenges of lockdown, the frustrations felt by being away from friends and missing the daily life of College. We understand and we feel the same. It is understood that not all children will be experiencing this in the same way, I would reiterate that there are clear sources of support from both teaching staff and pastoral staff, please use them at an early stage and do not wait until either you or your child is angry or upset.

I also signpost the mental-health support available on Firefly for students and for parents <https://heathfieldcc.fireflycloud.net/parents-1> which has been refreshed this week.

Finally, if ever there was a time when the phrase “*you can't please all the people all the time*” applies, it may interest you to see some of the divergent views from the survey that represent our wonderful, diverse and engaged community.

| View | Counter view |
|--|---|
| The use of other websites like Oak Academy or Hegarty are not good, my child doesn't like them. | Oak Academy is great, Hegarty Maths gives my child instant feedback and we really like it. |
| There is too much teacher talk in lessons. | There's not enough time with teachers talking. |
| The tutor times, assemblies and social engagement is great. These are a real highlight for my child. | Take away the tutor time and assemblies, they add to the workload and create stress. |
| Live lessons are fabulous, there is not enough of them though, provide more. | Live lessons are intimidating; we don't like them being time controlled. It is stressful and my child will not engage. |
| Loom lessons are a problem because they won't load and are not the same as the teacher being there. | Loom lessons are great because we can stop, rewind and review. It's just like having a one to one with a teacher. |
| You are doing a far worse job than any other school, lots of other schools are doing this better. | We have four schools to compare to and you are by far the best. From what I hear, it is clear that Heathfield is smashing it! |

We will keep doing our best and will keep pushing at the envelope of what we provide. We want the very best for our young people and we are grateful for all your support to keep them motivated at this time. We will update you further when we have correlated the parent view with the student and staff view.

Thank you as always for your support and your continued constructive positivity. It is much appreciated. I wish you and your family continued good health.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher