



Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

Headteacher: Sunil Chotai, BSc

12th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We come to the end of the spring half term, a half term characterised by another lockdown and the enforced school closure.

This last half term has obviously been a very challenging period for everyone, particularly for our students. Managing remote working, not being able to see their friends, teachers, and not being involved in the social and community aspects of school has been a major test for their wellbeing and resilience. My thanks to all our students and parents/carers for the support that they have provided for each other at this difficult and testing time. As we come to the end of this half term, I would also like to recognise and thank our staff for the support they have provided to students. The commitment that staff have shown to their classes in a tricky and unfamiliar context is very much appreciated.

Nobody could have predicted a full year like this. A world-wide pandemic that has touched most people's lives so fundamentally. Work, school and lifestyle all disrupted and with the added worry of what is to come if the economy does not recover swiftly has not been straightforward to deal with for anyone.

There is some room for optimism looking forward, whilst nothing is certain yet, we are hopeful that the government announcement scheduled for the 22nd February will signal an end to the current school closure and we will be able to open the school up again from the 8th March or soon after. I will of course update you all on any announcements and plans for reopening as they become clear.

The next half term

We return to full remote learning after the half term break on Monday 22nd February, hopefully everyone will be refreshed from a week away their screens. There are a number of issues that I need to make parents/carers and students aware of for this next half term.

Wellbeing and Engagement Day

Parents and carers will agree that after a lengthy period away from school, with energy, motivation and engagement levels flagging in some cases it is important that we spend some time with students exploring wellbeing and individual motivation. This is always difficult to do remotely; however, on Thursday 25th February it is our intention to devote the day to these issues. We want to engage students in wellbeing activities and in an individual phone/Teams facilitated discussion with their Form Tutor. The idea being to enhance students' wellbeing and levels of enthusiasm for the challenges of the next few weeks.

Details of activities and organisation for the day will be communicated to students via Teams. Each student will be given a 1:1 time slot with their Form Tutor when a chance to discuss wellbeing and engagement with work will be discussed. The Pastoral Team will be available during the day for further contact if it is felt needed. Microsoft Teams will be used for conversations or a phone call home can also be made. Form Tutors will be communicating this with their form group. Please note that on this day we will not be setting the usual academic work and that the timetable will be suspended.

In order to facilitate this day properly for the benefit of all students we will need all staff to spend time undertaking individual discussions with the tutor group members. Consequently, we will need to close the Key Worker and Vulnerable student (KWV) provision in school for this day. **So if you do use this provision, can I ask you please to be aware of this and make alternative arrangements? If you are stuck and you need this KWV provision and cannot manage then please do let me know and we will try to organise something.**

Key Worker and Vulnerable Student Provision

Currently we have 100 students enrolled on this provision in different year groups across Years 7-11. The supervision demands that this provision places on teachers and support staff, in addition to the conduct of remote lessons, are significant. We recently reviewed the staff supervision rota and the number of teachers needed has increased. Whilst this is manageable, there is an impact on students working from home in that obviously live lessons are not possible for a member of staff if they are supervising this provision. Going forward after half term our hope is that the number on roll has now reached its maximum and we can plan for remote learning and this supervision with confidence.

GCSE, AS, BTEC, Vocational and A level grades for summer 2021

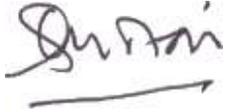
We are anticipating receiving guidance from the DfE and Ofqual regarding the process for assessing the grades for this coming summer's public examinations after half term. I will update parents and students as soon as we have any further information. In the meantime the message to all students, who in normal circumstances would be undertaking public examinations this summer, is please continue to work as per the directions communicated by your teachers in all the different subjects.

Year 9 Parents' Evening

A reminder that we will be holding the Year 9 Parents' Evening on Wednesday 3rd March between 3:30pm and 6:30pm in a virtual format via School Cloud Video Appointments. You will receive details of this after half term. To allow staff time to prepare for this, the school day will finish at the end of Period 4 meaning there are no lessons Period 5. This will not apply to students in school as part of the Key Worker Provision; they will remain in school as normal unless they are in Year 9, in which case they will leave at the end of Period 4 in order to be at home for the video appointments with parents and subject staff.

Finally, I wish all our families a safe, healthy and enjoyable half-term break.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunil Chotai', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Sunil Chotai
Headteacher