



Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

Headteacher: Sunil Chotai, BSc

15th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you and your family in good health and I hope that you are managing well despite the difficult lockdown circumstances. I am writing to update you with a summary of key pieces of information.

Remote Learning

Remote education (home learning) for all years is well underway and has been operating for the best part of two weeks. Engagement from students across the school has been very good; members of staff have been reporting that the vast majority are engaging well with live lessons and completing the work set to a good standard. My thanks and well done to all students who have approached their remote work with a sense of maturity and responsibility.

I can confirm that going forward we are expecting:

1. All students to continue to follow their normal school timetable when they are working at home. Work set and live lessons will follow the routine of the normal school timetable.
2. Live/recorded lessons will continue to be run via MS Teams (if there are Teams access issues please do contact us immediately). Live lessons will be signposted on ShowMyHomework (SMHW).
3. In addition to these live and recorded lessons, staff will be available to provide support and guidance for the vast majority of lessons via MS Teams and SMHW during lesson times. The exceptions will be when staff are undertaking other duties such as the supervision of keyworker and vulnerable children provision or if their own family circumstances hinder this.
4. Live and recorded lessons will be about 30 minutes in length for most students, for Years 11-13 they may be longer at the individual teacher's discretion.

If there are concerns regarding access to the various platforms then please do let us know immediately so that we can help resolve.

As parents will be aware, subject teachers across our school are able to draw upon some excellent online platforms that are designed to facilitate good independent learning. The full list of these packages is on our website and students should be aware how to access these.

Most recently the science department are using the package called KERBOODLE, the science section of this platform is excellent, covering all three sciences for students in Years 7-13. It has online text books and plenty of lesson resources that staff will direct pupils towards.

To log into the science element of this package for the first time students will need to use the first letter of their forename followed by their surname. These should be used for both **username and password; students will then be directed to change their password.**

The institution code is kn3.

For example for Mr. Doig:

Username: adoig
Password: adoig
Institution code: kn3

During the course of the next few days we will be seeking parental views on our remote learning provision, your input into this will be helpful for us in terms of determining any changes/improvements necessary.

Public Examinations 2021

We are currently waiting for further information, following the Secretary of State for Education's announcement that public examinations scheduled for summer 2021 will not go ahead as planned. We have not received any more details officially thus far, however some information emerging suggests that there may be a proposal that some short nationally set assessments will have a place in the plans to moderate outcomes across the country. Obviously once we know details we will inform parents immediately; it is fair however, in my view, to assume that there will be some mechanism to moderate outcomes nationally. It is therefore very important that all our public examination students understand that continuing to work diligently on the work set by staff is vital if they are to achieve a good grade in the summer. Not only will good performance be necessary for any school based assessment evidence that we put forward but there may also be a short external national test to prepare for at some point.

In school study provision for key worker and vulnerable children

This has now been operating since 5th January and we currently have 64 children on roll. The students involved complete the remote work set by their class teachers each day in school under supervised conditions. The classes commence at 8.50am and it is vital that students attend punctually. Parental support with this would be appreciated.

Last week, after lengthy discussion in school, we took the decision to require all students attending to wear a face covering at all times in the classroom and in the corridors. Parents and carers will understand that this decision is in response to information about the more transmittable coronavirus strain prevalent and the obvious need to protect better the children attending and the adults who are supervising. We understand that this is not ideal for the students' learning; however, it is necessary to ensure that adults and children attending are protected to a greater degree given the context of this new strain.

Parents' Evenings

Parents will beware that over the next few weeks we have two parents' evenings scheduled: for Year 11 students on 27th January and Year 8 on 4th February. We will be going ahead with these virtually as per Mr. Boyden's message to parents in the 12th December Link newsletter. The platform for hosting these virtual meetings is web based www.Schoolcloud.co.uk and therefore does not require a specific app. Log in and other details will be made available to parents in due course.

Free School Meals

During the last week, we have finalised arrangements for children entitled to free school meals during school closure. This has taken a bit of time; my apologies for the inconvenience caused. The lack of availability of a voucher system and our unhappiness with administering a food parcel service led to this delay. During the course of the last two days we have contacted all families entitled about arrangements; the details of what can be expected have been shared. If you have any concerns about this or are experiencing a particularly difficult time in this regard then please do let me know and we will try to assist.

Year 9 Teenage Booster Vaccinations Programme (Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio (Td/Ipv) & Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY)

This week we have been approached by the Bromley School Age Immunisation Team to facilitate this important booster vaccination programme on 26th January. This programme has been significantly delayed by the pandemic related pressures on the NHS. Whilst organising such a vaccination programme in school, given the lockdown and the short notice, is going to be challenging we have been asked to enable this as best as we can. Parents with children in Year 9 will soon receive full details of the arrangements including an electronic consent form. If parents could return the consent form immediately to the email year9booster@cdarwin.com and ensure their child attends the vaccination as per the letter then I would be very grateful.

Lateral Flow Device Testing

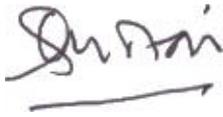
Over the last few days staff have set-up a facility in school to conduct LFD coronavirus tests and report test results to the national data base. This has been hard and convoluted work, colleagues in Student Services are to be congratulated on their diligence despite the challenges. This progress with testing will now mean that we are able to offer all staff a weekly LFD test and test close contacts of pupils/staff who have tested positive on a daily basis for 7 days as recommended by the DfE.

We have also been able to test those children attending the key worker provision and whilst mass testing of all students across the school has been put on hold during lockdown we anticipate that this will be introduced when schools return, subject to government guidance.

Finally

Over the last few days we have learnt that a couple of members of staff are seriously ill with the Covid-19 virus, their illness having taken a turn for the worst. In addition, I am aware that a couple of families have lost loved ones. Our thoughts are with you all, particularly those who have experienced a bereavement and those that have lost jobs or a means to earn a living. If there is any way in which we can help please do let me know.

Yours sincerely

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

Sunil Chotai
Headteacher