

22nd January 2021

Dear parents and carers

Thanks to parents and carers - survey

We have had a fantastic response to Mr Oliver's parent/carer survey regarding our provision of remote learning and in particular our move to more 'live' elements in students' daily lessons. It is clear that the work teachers are putting into 'live' lessons is supporting students in starting and completing their work; helping them to stay connected with peers and teachers; and creating a more structured routine to a student's day. Responses such as this one: *'I think the teachers and support staff are doing an amazing job at keeping the children focused and learning. It also helps with the live lessons for being more organised and to be able to ask for help if they don't understand or are struggling. Thank you. Couldn't ask for better support'* really energise colleagues at the end of a tough week.

Interestingly, following Gavin Williamson urging parents to let Ofsted know if they were unhappy with their child's school's provision, earlier this week Ofsted had received over 13,000 positive messages from parents across England, praising the work done by schools to support remote learning, and only 260 complaints!

Please see below for Mr Oliver's summary of the action we are taking to improve provision and systems even further based on the surveys:

Thank you to all parents/carers and students who took the time to complete the remote learning questionnaire. The responses were overwhelmingly positive! It was uplifting to read the kind and enthusiastic comments relating to the effort that staff are putting into maintaining a high standard of education for the children in such difficult circumstances. Parents/carers and students were particularly pleased with the increased 'live' element to lessons, and were grateful for the changes to the school day and IT support available through help@whitworth.on.spiceworks.com. It is clear from the record number of achievement points awarded, that engagement with remote learning is very good among all year groups. Students said that they were particularly pleased that their efforts were being celebrated through our rewards system on edulinkone.

In response to suggestions made through the questionnaires, the following steps have been taken to further improve our remote provision:

- *As a point of clarification, it is worth saying that edulinkone does not allow teachers to set a deadline on the same day that the lesson takes place. Therefore, it sometimes looks as though work is due to be handed in at the weekend. Please could I reiterate that students and parents must look at the date the work is available and not the date it is due. We are aware that this has caused confusion for some families but please note that the edulinkone homework system was not designed with a pandemic in mind. Therefore, we are having to adapt the resources that we already have available to us. Teachers have been asked to put the date, time of lesson and the name of the subject in the title of each homelearning notification. It is hoped that this will reduce confusion.*

- *All teaching staff have been reminded to finish their 'live' lessons a few minutes early so as to allow students to stretch their legs, and have a few minutes away from their screens. This also allows the students to get set up and be on time for their next lesson.*
- *Teaching staff have also been reminded to set work that can be realistically completed within the allocated time for the lesson so that students can plan their working day. Some students, however, might want to do additional work to get ahead, which is very commendable. Student can do this through the systems already in place e.g. Hegarty, Seneca etc. Additionally, students can ask their teachers to direct them to other resources that they can use to advance their studies even further.*
- *Some parents asked about provision in PE. This is a very tricky thing to organise, due to the current logistical challenges. However, Mr Cawley has set up a Wellbeing and Leadership initiative, which encourages students to get active. More details on this initiative will be communicated soon. Students in school will do some additional PE during form time on Tuesday to Friday.*
- *Some students have said that they could do with some paper to write or draw on. A supply of exercise books has been made available. Students and/or their parents/carers can collect these from reception during school hours.*
- *And finally, several parents/carers asked for a reminder of the current day structure. It is as follows:*
 - *8:40 to 9:00 - Virtual form time (Mondays only)*
 - *9:00 to 10:00 - lesson 1*
 - *10:00 to 11:00 - lesson 2*
 - *11:00 to 11:15 - break*
 - *11:15 to 12:15 - lesson 3*
 - *12:15 to 12:50 - lunch*
 - *12:50 to 13:50 - lesson 4*
 - *13:50 to 14:50 - lesson 5*

Congratulations to students

Congratulations to students once again on some excellent work and engagement so far this week. And this is despite the week including 'Blue Monday, which is' supposedly the most downbeat day of the year! Our 'Stars of the Week' for this week were all nominated by their teachers for their work and effort during P5 on Thursday 21st January. Well done to Olivia Hill, Liam Fitzpatrick, Matthew Butterworth, Jayden Caffrey, Tia Taylor-connearn, Samuel Young, Alfie Hayes, Millie Wilson, Millie Nuttall, James Ralphson, Asheligh Turner, Danielle Higginbottom, Ryan Lambert, Marley Staniland, Thomas Prince, Lainey Sheridan. Check what lesson you had on Thursday P5 to see which teacher nominated you!

Congratulations to staff

Congratulations also to Mr Haigh and Mrs Reed who have been appointed to temporary leadership roles within the Maths and Science faculties respectively. It is always good that we have opportunity to grow and develop colleagues within our school as leaders as well as outstanding teachers.

Meet the Covid expert scientists

Our school is part of a research project and survey led by the Office for National Statistics and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine where research scientists working in the field are gathering the experiences and views of a number of invited schools from across the



UK. The information and perspectives they gain are then shared with the government to inform future practice. We were invited to meet, virtually, with Professor James Hargreaves and Professor Punam Mangtani to hear about the work they are doing and the important community role schools play in this research. James is a Professor of Epidemiology and Evaluation at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the co-chief investigator of the School COVID study. He is particularly interested in the use of rigorous scientific methods to produce robust evidence to inform policy and practice. Punam is a Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at LSHTM and a senior scientist on the School COVID study. Her research has focussed on the transmission of diseases including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and until recently she was the chair of the influenza subcommittee of the WHO's Global Advisory Committee of Vaccine Safety. The most important part of this survey is of course the antibody testing programme to which the school has signed up, and over 134 of our students and staff have already signed up. If you want your child to be involved in the antibody testing, please ensure they are signed up by Monday 25th January.

Asymptomatic testing continues

Following the initial testing schedule of two lateral flow tests 3-5 days apart, our testing team has now established a weekly routine with students mainly tested on a Monday and (following the latest guidance) staff mainly tested on a Friday and a Monday. Unfortunately, as you will have seen in our message earlier in the week, current findings regarding the lateral flow test for serial testing of close contacts of a positive test in schools, suggest that there is insufficient evidence that this practice reduces transmission of the new variant of Covid-19 and therefore any student who is identified as a close contact of a positive case in school will still need to self-isolate at home.

Y11 Headteacher's video message

I have recorded a 5 minute message for our Y11 students at this challenging time. The link has been shared with Y11 students and the video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqhr38bTwqI>

Ofqual consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021

We are all awaiting clear guidance regarding this key issue. Ofqual are in consultation, but a final response is not expected until at least the end of February. There is opportunity for stakeholders to give their views. Please see the link below, which enables parents/ carers, teachers and students to respond to the current Ofqual consultation regarding the awarding of exam grades for Y11 this year. There is a consultation document and an online response process:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>

National Tutoring Programme

This is a government funded initiative to provide students with additional support because of the situation with Covid 19 causing school closures. They have pledged £350m to the programme which aims to support schools in providing a sustained response to the pandemic. There are 2 strands to the programme:

Tuition partners: provide access to subsidised high-quality tuition from an approved list of providers. We've chosen to work with MyTutor. MyTutor offers three-to-one tuition by connecting our pupils with top tutors studying at the UK's leading universities. We've worked with MyTutor to identify pupils that need a helping hand in raising grades or boosting



confidence, and each pupil has been matched with a tutor for regular online lessons that will take place in MyTutor's interactive lesson space.

Academic mentors: trained graduates employed by the school to provide intensive support. We've employed an academic mentor in Maths. Teach First have organised the recruitment, training and placement of the Academic mentors.

We are really excited to be able to offer this opportunity to our students.

My Tutor

Mrs Howarth has recorded a video message <https://youtu.be/oTm3sMvWZiM> for Y10 students who are being offered a place on the My Tutor scheme. This is a fantastic opportunity for small group, online tutoring at no cost to families.

Academic Mentor

Our Maths mentor Ms Howarth has completed her first week in school familiarising herself with teaching materials and the Maths Faculty. She will begin tutoring on Monday and students involved will be contacted today. A further video has been sent out to the families initially involved here: https://youtu.be/P_YBisakVPQ

Y10 virtual work Experience opportunities

We are looking to offer a fantastic opportunity to a small number of our Y10 students who are keen to pursue or find out more about some of the world's most competitive careers. InvestIN offer students an immersive experience of their dream career before they apply for university or choose their A level courses, so they can get a head-start over the competition. **On a two day weekend programme delivered virtually** they aim to create the 'ultimate work experience' through interactive simulations, networking sessions, seminars and career coaching guidance.

They offer experiences in 20 different careers, including STEM-related professions such as medicine, computer science and investment banking, through to careers in creative industries, law and politics. The full list and details of the weekend programme can be found here: <https://investin.org/pages/choose-your-career>

As a school we are keen to promote high aspirations and so we are going to fully fund a small number of places for Y10 students. The weekend course cost around £165 so I need to know that students are fully committed if they wish to take up this offer.

We need to move swiftly in order to reserve places. Any Y10 student who wishes to be considered for a school funded place needs to do the following:

Submit by email an application statement about 350 words saying which programme they are interested in; and explaining why they want this opportunity, how it would support their career plans, and why they wish to pursue a career in their chosen field. Deadline: 3.00pm on Monday 25th January. Emails to g.middlemas@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk

Y10 Parents' Evening

This will be another virtual evening and takes place on Wednesday 4th February. Details have been sent to Y10 families and we are confident that our recently trialled booking system and online appointments will work as efficiently for Y10 as it did for our Y8 trial Parents' Evening. Please note: appointments will be between 4.00pm and 6.00pm.

Reports

At this time of year, teaching staff would normally be inputting progress data for the second quarterly reports, which were due to be published at the start of February. However, due to the current situation, it is not possible for us to give a fully accurate measure of where students are



up to. Therefore, when school fully re-opens again, we will publish a different report which will credit students for their efforts and achievements whilst completing their studies from home.

Mathematics faculty and the EtonX Project

The mathematics faculty has managed to secure free places for the EtonX course on 'Resilience' for all our students at Whitworth. We believe this is a unique opportunity for our students to develop resilience, self confidence and help improve their academic success during this time of school closure. I am sure you will agree our students will require additional skills to keep up with this rapidly changing world and undertaking this course will ensure they become excellent communicators, great collaborators, adaptable, resilient and creative. This course will help bridge the gap between academic success and life in the real world.

This course will allow our students to benefit from Eton's acclaimed expertise in developing well-rounded, high achieving students and is of course accredited by Eton College upon completion. We are proud to announce some of our current year 10 and 9 students have successfully completed this course and have been certified last term.

As there is no home learning set in mathematics currently, Ms Jan and her team would like our students to have this opportunity to complete the course during the evenings or weekends during this time of remote learning..

The cost of the course is usually £49 per student but our students will be able to access this for free. The code for free access will be edulinked by Ms Jan with details on how to get started.

Finally, as always, have a good weekend and stay safe.

Best wishes



Mrs G Middlemas
Headteacher

