

Dear Parent / Carer

I write to you to update you on the last week and what we have been doing to ensure we provide the very best education and care for our students.

Thank you

The last week has been a particularly challenging one for us at school, for students and staff, as it has been for everyone in our community. In the last week, we had prepared for a 'staggered start', then had to change plans within 1 day of being back to organise a partial closure of the academy. As a result, we have organised provision for vulnerable children and students of key workers; launched online learning for over 1200 students; wrote to you all explaining that exams in January and the summer were on, re-organised our schemes of learning over the Christmas holidays to ensure students would be ready, only to have the Government make a U-turn and cancel them all together; and finally, had mass testing of school communities thrown at us with very little time to prepare. It has not been without its challenges, but as ever, the support and understanding you have shown staff throughout the week has been humbling and allowed us to maintain our core belief: putting students first. **Thank you**

Exams

I wish to explain what the Government 'cancelling exams' means for students certifying this year. Last year, during the first national lockdown, we were asked to submit grades for students based on 'teacher assessment'. These were initially intended to put through an 'algorithm', which would determine grades for students. Again, a last-minute change to this plan meant students received whichever grade was higher, the 'teacher assessment' or the one worked out by the 'algorithm'.

It is currently unclear as to how exactly student grades will be calculated this year. One thing is for certain, it has never been more important for students to continue with their learning and work. Each lesson, piece of work and assessment will add to the existing portfolio of evidence staff will use when formulating their 'teacher assessment'. Staff have been working tirelessly to ensure that their online lessons allow for the evidence to be collected. If any revised arrangements for exams will be evidence-based, it is important that we continue to follow specifications and schemes of work. Therefore, it is **essential for all students to continue to work hard as always**.

I will update parents and students due to take exams this year as soon as we have more information about the exact method which will be used to assess.

Provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers

A reminder that if both you and your partner are key workers, or if your child is classed as vulnerable and is unable to remain at home, your child will be able to attend school and they will access the remote learning at a computer the same as the children who are accessing this at home. On Friday, the DfE updated their guidance to include the phrase below in **bold.**

"Children and young people are eligible to attend school or college if: a parent or carer is a critical worker, and they can't keep their child at home."

Please note this provision is intended to offer support to families only when both parents need to leave the family home to attend work and there is no alternative childcare available. You may be required to provide evidence of your employment.

Online learning

As mentioned earlier, last week we have moved entirely to delivering high-quality remote learning for all students. This is in the form of live lessons on Google Meet. The number of students logging into their live lessons increased as the week progressed. Thank you for your support with this. We have been making lots of phone calls and sending lots of text messages to ensure students who were not logging in were then doing so. We will continue to call and send messages home if students are not accessing lessons. **All students accessing remote learning should follow their normal timetabled lessons.** If a student has lost their timetable or a spare copy is required, please get in touch with us using enquiries@acklam.outwood.com and we can send one to you. **Live lessons** provide a more interactive experience meaning students have more opportunity to engage with their peers and teachers in a 'virtual classroom'. It is imperative that students have their camera on

Last week we had over 50 vulnerable and key worker students in the building each day, which compared to the last national lockdown is a significant daily increase. To help minimise the risk of transmission, staff who can work from home are now doing so. When teaching staff are in school supervising the vulnerable and key worker students, they will not always be able to deliver live lessons that day, instead, work will be provided on Google Classroom.

Safety measures

As you know, we have worked incredibly hard since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to keep our school as safe as possible, and I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the safety measures in place at our school:

- All students and staff must wear a face covering in communal areas, unless exempt.
- Everyone is expected to remain in their allocated bubbles and maintain social distancing.
- Students are encouraged to wash their hands regularly throughout the day.
- As there are fewer people in the building, we have reverted to ensuring 2m social distancing is in place for all students and staff.
- A comprehensive risk assessment has been carried out and can be found [here](#)

A reminder that we are trying to work with windows open in classrooms for ventilation. As the cold days have returned, and with the need for ventilation in mind, students may need a few more layers of clothing. This must be a jacket or coat worn on the outside of a students' blazer and not underneath. Key worker and vulnerable students who are attending school **are required to wear normal school uniform.**

We will continue to stay in touch with you throughout this time and will update you on any major announcements as they happen. However, do get in touch if you need any further information, or if you require any support relating to these new arrangements.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support and patience during this very difficult time. We are all adjusting to the ever-changing guidance but will always work to put the needs of the students first.

Yours faithfully



Mark Gray
Principal