

Ref: GWA/LWO

3 February 2021



Dear Families

I have held back in recent weeks from what had become perhaps too regular communication quite simply because the educational landscape has changed little and we are in what is an uncomfortable but settled period of remote learning until at least March 8. I am told that we will have two weeks' notice of any return to school and unhelpful rumours abound about whether schools will reopen with a rota system, open only for certain year groups or a re-opening possibly further deferred until after Easter. My sources of information are no better than yours and continued uncertainty is a shared concern for us all.

What I do know and am heartened by, is that the national position appears to be improving with infection rates, hospital admissions and Covid-related deaths all falling. In stark contrast to that, we have regrettably had to close our on-site provision for those children with significant additional needs for the rest of this week due to a member of staff testing positive and several colleagues also having to self-isolate as a result. That area of the school will be deep cleaned once more before children and staff can safely return next week.

### **Examinations**

It remains uncertain what arrangements will be put in place for Y11 and Y13 students in the summer. A national consultation closed last week with over 90,000 responses. There is currently talk of externally set tests to help teachers come to an accurate assessment of student performance. It would appear that there will be no resorting to any statistical algorithm which, as we know, proved disastrous last summer. It also seems likely that students will receive grades submitted by their teachers based on a range of evidence available to them including internal assessments, mock examinations, practical assessments and, perhaps, externally set tests. The outcome of the consultation is expected around February 22nd, which is also when we might get more detail about any relaxation of lockdown or return to school plans.

My advice to all students remains the same - keep on focussing on your studies, attending remote sessions and submitting all necessary work whilst also prioritising your own emotional health and wellbeing by taking some exercise and trying to find some time away from the screen. The level of engagement from Sixth Form students continues to be outstanding and those non-engaging students in other years are being monitored, supported and coached. Rest assured, when we receive greater clarity from the authorities we will be in touch.

### **Pastoral Care**

I shall not dwell on this as my colleague, David Bishop, Deputy Head, is in the process of constructing a comprehensive mailer to explain the processes in place to support families and children from a health and wellbeing perspective. What I would say is that I am delighted with the pastoral care being offered by tutors, Heads of House and other staff charged with monitoring some of our most vulnerable children and most needy families. I am sure there are many of you tearing your hair out with the juggling act of work and home-schooling, alongside the everyday challenges of running a household. You have my sympathy and admiration and I encourage any of you to get in touch if we can be of any assistance and we can signpost you or your children towards further support.

### **Chromebooks**

We are hoping to distribute over 600 Chromebooks over half-term to those families that have signed up to the project. As stated previously, this project, on which we embarked well before the pandemic, builds on the investment we have put into our IT infrastructure and is part of a seismic shift in the way that we intend to deliver technology enhanced learning. Increasingly, schools are becoming 'Google Schools' or 'Apple Schools' with a view

Ashchurch Road, Tewkesbury  
Gloucestershire GL20 8DF

Reception: **01684 292152**  
Attendance Line: **01684 851806**

Email: **office@tewkesburyschool.org**  
Website: **www.tewkesburyschool.org**

Headteacher: **Mr G M Watson** BSc PGDip NPQH

to enriching the educational process by furnishing youngsters with resources and information at their fingertips. The pandemic has simply illustrated the need for us to move even more swiftly in this direction. I am hoping that, over time, more families will join us on what is a very exciting development. I also expect a very positive take up from Y6 families when they get the opportunity to sign up next month.

We are looking to integrate technology into all lessons but currently, we have only 7 hard-wired computer rooms across the school that would accommodate 30 children and on a typical day 60 lessons are being taught at the same time. Inevitably, this means access to a computer is limited and only possible on a bookable basis.

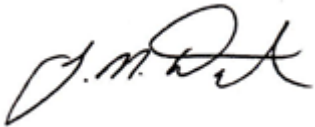
Families who are concerned about the monthly payments, which will not start until May, are strongly advised to contact the [Birmingham Education Learning Foundation \(BELF\)](#) who are more than happy to have a conversation and, indeed, such contact is an expected part of the process and something the charity is specifically designed to support.

### **Rewards**

I continue to see some excellent examples of home learning including songs, fantastic culinary creations and some quite outstanding costume designs. We recently received another £500 worth of Amazon vouchers which have been funded courtesy of just some of the receipts of our Christmas raffle, commission from school photo orders and [Your School Lottery](#) support. I am hoping to get those vouchers out to deserving youngsters in the next few weeks.

Thanks again for your continued support and understanding.

Best wishes to you and your families



**Mr G M Watson**  
**Headteacher**