



Wigston College

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7th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write to you again following further announcements from the government to clarify what is currently happening in our school community. I hope that you and your families are keeping well during this Lockdown and are managing to stay safe.

Firstly can I thank those of you who have contacted us to thank us and show your support for what we are aiming to achieve here in Wigston. As directed, we are now closed to students with the exception of vulnerable children and children of critical workers, for whom we remain open each day. We have quickly set up the running of this and are currently working on our remote learning platforms; response to examination changes and the implementation of the testing in schools programme.

Examinations

The government have announced that summer exams for GCSE and A Level are cancelled and that there will be some form of teacher assessment. Once again we await further information about the vocational qualifications. We currently do not know what any of these will look like, but await guidance which we will share with you as soon as we get it. What we do know is that students need to fully engage in the remote learning that we are providing to ensure that they get the best possible outcomes. If you have any questions about exams please contact Mr Billingham, Deputy Headteacher.

Remote Learning

In response to the guidance issued on Monday this week, staff have moved to set up remote education to ensure that our students have access to resources a week before the government deadline of 11th January. The Secretary of State in his speech to the House of Commons yesterday announced further changes to the guidance. The expectation is that now remote education needs to be between 3 to 5 hours per day depending on the age of the students. The recommendation is for 3 to 4 hours in Key Stage 3 and 4 to 5 hours in Key Stages 4 and 5. We were already meeting and in some areas exceeding this guidance.

For clarification, remote education does not mean virtual learning which is where students just have online lessons with their subject teachers. The best learning especially for younger students takes place using a variety of learning resources and activities including guided independent study. We also recognise the wellbeing of our students and understand there needs to be flexibility in how the information is delivered to them.

We also have to recognise that there are greater demands on teachers as they manage online and in school lessons for those children of critical workers and the vulnerable children. They have also provided activities beyond the curriculum including quizzes and competitions, which have helped to engage students in learning. We continue to respond to concerns raised about the mental health of our students and we also have to work with the current constraints of our school and college based hardware and software systems. Whilst the government are rightly funding this for students in their homes they are not providing the same support and finances for schools and college infrastructure. We will continue to roll out our programme of virtual learning. Currently we are providing virtual learning for Years 11, 12 and 13 with some Year 10 lessons being rolled out next week. For other year groups, we will be including pre-recorded teacher-narrated lessons from next week.

At the Academy the new Remote Learning tab on the Wigston Academy website is now up and running this has details of remote learning activities for this half term for students at the Academy. We have chosen two excellent websites <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize> and <https://classroom.thenational.academy/> to support with this, as recommended by the DFE. The work set on the educational platforms is in line with our curriculum

mapping for each year group. Both National Oak and Bite Size educational platforms use quizzes and videos to make the learning engaging and interactive and are platforms recommended for remote learning by the DFE.

On some occasions students study subjects that are not covered by the two platforms, for example OCR Sport in Year 10 and 11. Information about these subjects' work is detailed in the Remote Learning Tab. Another example is Business Studies where students are directed to use Seneca Learning.

Year 11 students are also being invited to virtual lessons, where they join the classroom via Microsoft Teams. This will follow the pattern of the students' timetables. This will also be trialled with Year 10 during the next few weeks. Students will also have the usual tasks from the website and additional tasks on Satchel:One.

KS3 students will have additional tasks set via Satchel:One in a variety of formats and in the next week or so, this will include at least one recorded/narrated lesson per week with the exception of Global Citizenship, which is fortnightly.

Year 12 and 13 students will continue to access live lessons through TEAMS which continues to follow their timetables.

If you have any questions about Teaching and Learning please contact Mrs A Pollon.

Free School Meals

We will continue to provide free school meal options to those students who are entitled to these during this Lockdown. More details of this will be provided, if in the meantime you have any questions please contact Mr P Leatherland.

Testing

Following the government's instruction, we continue to prepare and train staff to be able to undertake testing across the Trust, this remains dependent on further guidance and the provision of resources. Testing is based solely on individual consent and students are under no obligation to engage in the testing system when it is set up but we encourage it. Students will self-administer the test and staff will then process the results. You should have already received a link to the consent form, if not please let us know. More information will follow, in the meantime if you have any questions please contact Mr I Cox.

As we all recognise, learning is not just about academic education we also know that healthy, happy young people need more than this. Therefore, we will continue to offer activities including quizzes and competitions beyond the curriculum and also reassure you that our pastoral support team including Heads of Year, Tutors and Mentoring Team are still here to support our students so please contact us if you need anything.

Finally, as with everything at the moment, things will no doubt change and probably quickly. We will respond as swiftly as we can to keep you updated and please know that our students are at the heart of all that we do. We know that this Lockdown period will be challenging and difficult for our students and community and want you to know that we are here to help, therefore if you have questions, queries or worries please contact us and we will be very happy to help.

We hope that you and yours keep safe and well.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Mike Wilson
Headteacher
Wigston Academy
Wigston College