



Parent Newsletter 08/01/2021

Happy New Year and welcome to our first parent newsletter of the spring term.

Change of plan!

Well so much for Plan A as we said cheerio to the students before Christmas – and also Plan B before we came back, the National lockdown has well and truly scuppered our plans all round. Plan C – Virtual school is however now off and running!

The vaccine roll-out is starting to gather pace now and I have to hope that before we know it, we will be back to normal, and for that, I am happy to do whatever we must for the time being to get us through safely.

Open for (Virtual) Learning

As you will know by now, to minimise transmission, the country has been asked to remain at home where possible, so our gradual return plan is no longer relevant.

All teaching now at the Academy is virtual. Even critical worker childcare in the Academy is being delivered along with everyone else online

That said, every student is expected to attend school online everyday for their full day! We will provide a full and rich curriculum via our TEAMS platform, with day to day work being done either in class note, on paper and pictured in or posted in TEAMS chat by group, and then we are assessing progress through homework assignments (yes we are still doing homework!) and formal class assignments whereby student will receive full formative feedback from their teachers.

Expectations

You will note later in the Teaching and Learning section that we are aiming to have live staff support in most lessons. Please see the remote learning section below for full details of how things will work

I have already shared our formal virtual learning document (on the website too) as term started and we will keep you posted with developments through this newsletter.

So far, I have to say I am delighted with the response to virtual school so far. **Many lessons are seeing 90% plus attendance and we will be chasing up on those not attending.** We know that extra hub sessions will be inevitable once we are back for those who don't engage so please do encourage your child to do all they can now.

Information Overload

There is so much information to share as things change and I am very aware that there is a huge amount to take in at the moment so I am deliberately not going to go into the detail about some of the big issues we are facing such as

- Our decision to cancel vocational exams this January
- What will happen regarding GCSE's / A Levels and vocational qualifications this year for year 11 and 13

- Our new COVID-19 Testing facilities
- Supporting students who do not attend virtual learning
- How our pastoral offer is developing this time

I will be communicating every week as ever through this newsletter, and each week I will try to ensure that each of the above issues are dealt with fully and clearly in a timely manner. This week, the priority is remote learning – so Mrs Wenlock has written the main newsletter item this week to help us set off as we mean to go on.

I hope you find this approach helpful and I will continue to try to keep our communication down to a minimum and if possible include most key information and letters with this Friday newsletter. As always, I encourage you to let me know your thoughts and to share your feedback via our office@open-academy.org.uk email address – I will be polling your views around a number of issues in due course, so for now...

Welcome back!

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1. Remote Learning

We are really pleased with the engagement of students in remote learning; Attending live lessons with their teachers, participating in a range of activities and producing great work.

A reminder that all remote learning is centred around Microsoft Teams. We are continuing to develop and better our use of this system.

Teachers are increasing their use of 'Class Notebook' in this system as for day-to-day lessons which students find easier to use. Students have a notebook for each of their classes which they can use like a digital exercise book. Teachers can also share links to exam board materials, video clips, websites and wider reading for example. Class Notebook is contained within each class team where students can also find lesson recordings and ask for help from their teachers via 'posts'.

Video <https://youtu.be/En6NpcZldUM> here and guidance notes are attached for your reference.

Teams Assignments is still being used to set some class work. Once we establish the consistent use of Class Notebook, Assignments will be used to set and feedback on associated homework and in-class assessment tasks that students can upload for marking by their teachers using rubrics.

Whilst many students can access Teams on a device, not all can or want to produce the work from tasks set electronically, preferring to hand-write instead. This is fine; students just need to ensure they keep their day-to-day lesson work organised and continue to upload pictures of homework or assessments set by their teachers into Teams Assignments.

Live Lessons:

We understand there must be flexibility around family life and wellbeing; students sitting at a laptop for 5 hours back-to-back is not a healthy approach! Where possible, teachers are aiming to schedule live support for all lessons, and this will be delivered in a range of ways such as starting the lesson to introduce and explain the task and then meeting with students towards the end to check learning. Sometimes, a teacher may also be present via the posts to offer support.

Knowledge Organisers:

If there are any occasions when the internet or devices are not working, please use these so that students do not fall behind. The knowledge organisers contain the critical minimum learning that students need across all subjects for this term with a range of activities to complete.

Hub:

Y11 Hub will continue if being used for coursework or controlled assessment but not for exam revision. Y11 teachers will confirm with their groups.

Hub for all other years was set up in the autumn for students who did not engage in learning during the first lockdown. Please encourage your child to engage in remote learning so that they are not timetabled for these sessions on our return from the current lockdown. Please see the guidance from Mr Ward for more details.

2. Critical Worker and Vulnerable Student Child Care

If you would like to access a place for your child to be supervised in school for their remote learning due to your status as a critical worker, or indeed as they are potentially vulnerable, Please contact Mr Wilkinson on phillip.wilkinson@open-academy.org.uk

It is expected that all children will socially distance from one another on site, and from the staff who have volunteered to be in during these heightened risk times.

They are expected to attend in full uniform and comply with all aspects of our Positive Behaviour code to ensure we can look after them. Along with students at home, the expectation is that they will attend all their online lessons throughout every day

Please note the following useful information to help you and your child get through this 3rd and final lock down.

As there is so much to consider, I will try to stick to our usual format of clear sections to help you find information relevant to you. Not all year groups will have specific sections this week but we will be back to normal in those terms

3. Wellbeing

Please have a look at the Action for happiness Wellbeing planner for January 2021 – I know many of you liked to revive this first time round so, here we go again!

As before every week we will try to add information to encourage you and your child to be kind to yourselves through these tough times.

Remember our pastoral teams are here to help if your child has worries and concerns – we will be contacting you but if it is pressing – don't wait!

4. Year 7

Year 7 update

We find ourselves welcoming you all back in a way we didn't foresee as we broke up for the Christmas holiday. We understand how frustrating this is for everyone. We would like to firstly thank all our students and parents/carers for their hard work and perseverance over the last week. Students have risen to the challenge and adapted amazingly well to on-line learning. We've seen some fantastic interaction during the live lessons and students supporting each other when technology fails. As a year team we are incredibly proud of you all.

While working from home we are asking students to follow their timetabled lessons. We know that this isn't always possible due to different reasons. If a student has to go back to complete the work at a different time, please make sure they don't spend any more time on the work than they would in a normal lesson. A reminder that cameras should be turned off and microphones only switched on if the teacher has asked them to be.

Shout outs this week

Laurence Hawkins from Mr Miller - Really impressed with the effort and standard of work, especially as it was the first day back and under these circumstances.

Lucy-Rose Brown – Excellent presentation in English for Macbeth.

Keep up the fabulous work everyone.

As we are all at home more we would like to set students a challenge for lockdown or can you learn a new skill?

Here are a few suggestions:

- learn how to knit, or learn calligraphy
- Exercise everyday for at least 30 minutes,
- Read for 20 minutes everyday,
- Cook your family's favourite meal

Please share your ideas with us, it would be great to celebrate the successes.

A text was sent out earlier this week to all parents asking if students have access to a laptop/computer to complete their work. Can parents/carers please let the year team know if this is not the case. If a student is struggling with technology or TEAMS please contact us and we will be able to assist. The year team are able to reset passwords for TEAMS is required.

Look out for Tutor time, students will be invited by their form tutor to sessions, they will be providing support and important information that you will need to prepare you for the school day, just like they would if you were in school.

A reminder for students, we would like to remind you all that although we aren't in school we are still here to support you, via email, face to face on TEAMS or the telephone Please contact the year team or your form tutor if you need anything, if you are worried or have any concerns no matter how small.

Can we remind parents/carers the year 7 office is no longer open in school. If you need to contact the year team please do so via email debbie.lamb@open-academy.org.uk or sally-ann.hewitt@open-academy.org.uk, alternatively contact the year 7 team on 07949 455922 during normal school hours.

Mrs S-A Hewitt- Coleman - Head of year 7
Mrs D Lamb – Assistant Head of year 7

5. Year 8

Hello from the Year 8 team!

Back into hibernation we go and we would like to start by saying how pleased and encouraged we are by the amount of students partaking in live lessons and engaging with their online learning. We understand there are struggles with technology, such as access and the amount of devices available, and hope that other information in this newsletter may provide some answers. If the use of technology is overwhelming, reading is always a great use of time and working on spellings and handwriting is always beneficial. Please also make use of the knowledge organisers – lots of revision and activities to be working through.

As of Monday 11th, tutors will be running interactive tutor sessions from 8.40 – 9.00am to prepare students for the day ahead so please look out for the invitations coming your way and I'm also hoping to restart the Game On! Sessions that ran last lockdown, on Monday's at 3.15pm – everyone welcome!

Wishing you all well, Miss Lines and Mrs Smith

6. Year 9

Happy New Year to everybody.

The year 9s have been amazing this week. Great attendance with online learning.

Please email either of us sean.lambert@open-academy.org.uk or rachel.roe@open-academy.org.uk or telephone Mrs Roe on 07810 515978 with any queries.

7. Year 10

I'd like to start this week's newsletter by thanking you all for your support getting our virtual academy up and running again. All the students seem to have got off to a flying start, which is excellent!

All students should be attending their tutor time as usual at 8:40 and a Teams meeting invitation should have been sent out to all. It is vitally important that students attend as this not only sets them up for the day ahead, but is also a chance for tutors to answer any

questions, sort any IT issues and give any important information out to students. Students should be working to their normal timetable and should be accessing their work in each classes Class Notebook; it is so important that they attend their classes live lessons, as this is where questions can be asked and teachers can explain any new concepts etc.

If you are experiencing any 'teething issues' around IT or knowing what your child should be doing, please let us know and we will endeavour to sort issues asap. Mrs Roberts will be calling as many families as possible over the next few weeks to check in, but if you need anything prior to her call, please email one of us. Many thanks, Mrs Clayton

8. Year 11

Happy New Year! This is not where we wanted to be in 2021, and the constantly changing situation is, I am sure, difficult and confusing for students. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that despite the fact that students won't sit traditional exams they will still be assessed and therefore **MUST** continue learning online. This is not just because we need evidence to base our assessments on but because the courses they may do next year are based on the knowledge they learn from their GCSE and BTEC subjects.

PPE 1 results will be used as partial evidence for assessments but we all know that after PPE 1 students who perhaps didn't do well often improve so we need evidence to show that you have improved. If students did do well in PPE 1 they still need to show that they are maintaining this grade at least, if not improving further.

Students are expected to attend their tutor group on a Teams meeting at 8.40 in a live lesson. They should then follow their timetable with live lessons and work set on class notebook. We appreciate that students maybe sharing devices so live lessons will be recorded to be viewed later. I know that teenagers have a tendency to want to stay in bed late but please help ensure that they are up, dressed and ready to learn at 8.40. Maintaining a routine is good for mental health as well as educational learning.

Please contact ruth.pearsall@open-academy.org.uk or michele.middleton@open-academy.org.uk

9. Sixth Form

Huge well done to you all – you have completed a whole week of virtual learning and lockdown! As always I am so very proud of you all, and how well you have all got stuck into the live lessons and virtual learning.

As we know by now, A level exams have been cancelled for 2021. I know that most of you have very mixed feelings about this, and I absolutely understand. So far, we haven't been given any more information about how your CAG's (centre assessed grades) will be decided. As such, it is really important that you all continue to attend all of your live lessons, return all of your set work, complete all homework, and be as focused and involved with your virtual learning as I know you all can be.

Almost all of you have now completed your UCAS applications. Please remember that Lucy is still available for virtual meetings for those of you wishing to do Apprenticeships and needing some guidance or direction.

Please make sure that you are all getting out of the house once a day – stick on your headphones and listen to a podcast, an audio book, or some of your favourite playlists, and just get walking. Honestly, it makes such a huge difference to your mood and wellbeing. Let

me know what things you have been doing every day (and any good recommendations for podcasts or happy songs!)

I was also talking to my Year 13 Psychologists this week and telling them that during lockdown I turn into a cooking/baking queen! This week I tried a Tik Tok wrap hack. I can confirm that it was a winner in my house and super easy to do. Have a go and let me know how yours turned out, and any suggestions for fillings that are more exciting than mine! Here are pics of the ones I made for my kids.



Have a wonderful weekend, and remember as always that all of the Sixth Form team are here if you need us.

10 Vulnerable student's technology access – free devices for those on free school meals!

Please see the attached poster and leaflet regarding accessing technology for young people who may be classed as vulnerable – don't delay – give them a ring!

A poster from Norfolk County Council titled 'Free digital equipment for vulnerable students'. It features a blue background with icons of a computer monitor, a laptop, a globe, and a cloud with a gear. The text describes the scheme, which provides reconditioned laptops, wifi access, and broadband dongles to struggling families. It lists eligibility criteria: any student without digital devices at home, pupils claiming pupil premium, and families claiming universal credit on a low wage or who have been furloughed. Contact information for the Norfolk Assistance Scheme is provided, including the website www.norfolk.gov.uk/nas and the phone number 0344 800 8020. A note states that individual applications are accepted only and bulk orders are not accepted.

Norfolk County Council

Free digital equipment

for vulnerable students

Reconditioned laptops, access to wifi, broadband dongles are just some of the items being distributed to struggling families unable to access the internet during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Make sure vulnerable students get the resources they need to help continue their learning at home, reduce isolation and connect with friends and family.

Contact Norfolk Assistance Scheme direct to apply today www.norfolk.gov.uk/nas • Tel 0344 800 8020

Individual applications accepted only.
We are unable to accept bulk order applications

Who is eligible?

- Any student who does not currently have access to digital devices at home
- Pupils claiming pupil premium
- Families claiming universal credit, who are on a low wage or who may recently have been furloughed

11. Library News

It is important that students continue to keep reading while they are learning from home. There are several ways that we are continuing to promote reading and providing book access to students. Please see the attached document 'Reading During Remote Learning' for more information and explore the various links with your child.

We have also re-started our staff read-a-long. Previous recordings and our current read "The

Call of the Wild" can be streamed or downloaded from this link: [Open Academy Reads](#)
We'd also love to have your say on our next read. Please vote on which book you would like us to read next: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=W8ZO2qGEd0-AYQgaPv6magdSosHkOpMo_aeWbTVKLNURjFVQjVPTkdEWkVUSEZUNjdOMU1SSIE0Ri4u

If you have any questions or require any further support, please get in touch.

Miss Ling, School Librarian

12. Accessing TEAMS on Play stations (4/5) and Xboxes

If you are struggling for devices yet have a console – some have an internet browser so may be able to access TEAMS – some help may be available here...

<https://www.psu.com/news/how-to-access-microsoft-teams-on-ps4-and-ps5/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiNzN8QxIRI>

Hopefully these might provide a bit of a starter if you need it

13. (More) Lockdown ideas for the family

As we get back into the whole business of being in lock down again we thought you might appreciate a few ideas. Do have a look ...

<https://indoorexplorers.com>

This site has lots of ideas and advice around coping with being at home and cooped up together

Staying safe resources

Another video resource you might want to share with your child is this one from the local police. This one talks about how during this lockdown if you are out and about you might be asked by the police to account for what you are doing to help keep everyone safe. Watch this video which is something slightly similar to 'Stop and Search

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_JYGPuTfk

14. Food support / Free School meals / LA support program

As more and more people experience hardship, it is vital that they make use of all the support currently on offer.

Students on free school meals should be already receiving communications regarding support – if you think you are eligible but have not heard from us please do get in touch via your child's head of year

If you are struggling - please see the attached poster from the Local authority regarding their Winter Support Package which includes help for those who need it for food/fuel/energy bills/ day to day essentials

15. Parents Evenings Year 11 and 8

At this point we are still hoping to run our parents evening but virtually. Year 11 parents will have already received a letter and years 8's will shortly, detailing how it will work / how to book appointments etc.

We think it is important to continue to do as much of what is needed and normal as possible so we will continue to give this a try

16. Chaplain's Reflection from Mark

https://youtu.be/prlm8lv_5jk

Break Free Reflection 8/1/21

First of all, I wish you a happy new year and as I begin, I want to tell you a story. As a man was passing some elephants he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, or cages. It was obvious that the elephants could at any time, break away from their bonds but, for some reason they did not.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. 'Well, the trainer said, 'when they are very young and much smaller, we use the same size rope to tie them, and at that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are influenced or conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free.'

The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds, but because they believed they couldn't they were stuck right where they were."

As in March, November and at this present time we have been placed in lockdown. The start of this year has been really chaotic and I'm sure many of us can't believe we are back here again. As we look around today, this pandemic is influencing the world in a negative way. Freedom has been diminished and hope has sometimes faded and this can take away our joy and peace. This influence can have a negative effect on our lives and it conditions us to believe just like the elephants that we can't break free from it. I want to encourage you to just because we are in lockdown, not to accept negativity and refuse to let it influence or condition you. You have the power to break free from it, you have the power to shape your life with happiness, peace and hope for a great future.

I saw this quote last week from Edith Lovejoy Pierce and it says this. "We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity, and its first chapter is New Year's Day."

Let's write and shape the pages and direction of our own lives in a positive way this year, it's going to be a great one.

In wrapping this up today, God is with us to help us through everything. He says "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

You are all in my thoughts and prayers. Have a wonderful week.
God bless you

Mark

