

3 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your families continue to be safe and well and are managing in these unusual times. I trust that you will find the updates in this letter useful.

Home Learning

We will be continuing to provide home learning resources for students in Years 7-10. Pack 1 was issued on 23 March and Pack 2 will be available from Monday 20 April on the school website at www.johnwillmottschool.co.uk. These resources are available via the pupil drive and information regarding how to access this is detailed below. Parents who have requested paper copies will have them posted out during the Easter break. The Inclusion team have also provided differentiated resources for key students and these will be posted out separately.

Students will need to use their normal school login details to be able to access them. There is a 'password reset' tab on the top right hand side of the website written in white text. If there are any problems regarding this please contact the school via the enquiry line at enquiry@jws.bham.sch.uk. Please bear with us as this may take some time depending on the available staffing in school. There is also a guide for Mathswatch logins listed in the COVID-19 letters sections.

All students in Years 7, 8 & 9 will also be receiving some PiXL resources in the post as part of a new Inter House competition. Details will be in the pack, but in brief, these are a range of subject based challenges that can be completed to earn house points. There are also ways to earn bonus points by sending in photo evidence of your work to the relevant house email address. All information will be within the pack.

We have also uploaded onto the website the first of our weekly reflections. These take the place of our weekly assemblies and will feature a different theme each week. Mrs Lockley has provided the first video with an accompanying film.

Students who receive Free School Meals

All students in receipt of free school meals should have received their first shopping vouchers by now. Birmingham Local Authority has provided additional funding to ensure that we are able to fund a further 2 weeks of shopping vouchers while we wait for the national voucher scheme to start after Easter. Arrangements for the distribution of these to qualifying families have been put in place. If you believe that you should be in receipt of free school meals and you have not received your latest shopping vouchers by Monday 6 April, then please email the school enquiry line and leave your details. Someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

If your circumstances have changed and you feel that you could be entitled to free school meals the application form is on the school website as well as the link to apply directly. You can claim the following benefits and still be entitled to free school meals.

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods);
- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190);
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.

Communication

Heads of Year have been contacting families over the last two weeks to provide support where needed. If you need additional support, please do get in touch via the school enquiry line. Your message will be passed on and someone will be in touch. We can provide advice and support on a range of issues including the home learning resources, access to foodbanks and signpost to local charities providing specialist support, mental health and wellbeing. We are also in touch with several agencies that may be able to help in specific circumstances. Please do not be afraid to ask, these are unprecedented times and we will be happy to support wherever we can.

All the resources that I am referring to can be found on the school website. The latest John Willmott School newsletter has also recently been added to the website to celebrate the events of the last 2 terms. Please click on the red banner at the top of the page marked COVID-19 resources and everything will be listed there for you. I have recently added a link to Mindful Healthcare as well as a contact for a parent support line offered by The Educational Psychology Service and advice regarding the use of social media.

Social media & safeguarding

Because of the increased amount of screen time students are having, there has been a recent national surge in incidents of peer to peer online abuse, incidences of grooming and online scams involving young people. It is now more important than ever that you check what your child is doing online. Use the social media guidance on the website as a guide and please get in touch if you have any concerns.

Staff will continue to monitor the safety and well-being of our students. If you have concerns, please contact the school via the enquiry email address. Someone will get back to you as soon as possible but this is not monitored 24 hours a day and we will be running on reduced staffing. If you require urgent assistance and believe that someone is at immediate risk of harm, then please call the police.

Year 11, 12 & 13 examinations

We know that the past few weeks have been a distressing and uncertain time for you following the government's intention to cancel examinations this year and move to a different system of awarding grades as a result of the coronavirus epidemic. Further information has been received today from Ofqual. There is detailed information for parents and students which can be found on the school website www.johnwillmottschool.co.uk and the link below;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcses-as-and-a-level-awarding-summer-2020>

The guidance, we hope, will give you some assurances. Ofqual have stated that schools will use a range of data and evidence to support students' grades. Please be assured that we will draw on a wide range of evidence to show this. Also, you will not be disadvantaged if you did not complete or were not set any work after the schools closed. There will be no requirement for you to complete any additional work or separate assessment for your grade.

It is important that you do not ask schools to share their grades with you. Schools will have to adhere to the Ofqual guidance which specifically states that schools should not disclose grades. We must adhere to this in order to protect the integrity of the examination system.

This guidance relates to GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and further guidance will be issued regarding vocational and technical qualifications as soon as it is available.

Please also be assured that students' grades this year will have equal status with universities, colleges and employers to help our young people move on to the next stage in their lives.

We are extremely privileged in our trust to work alongside such wonderful students. They are indeed a credit to their parents and carers. Thank you for the trust you have placed in us in educating and caring for them and thank you for the important role you play in supporting schools.

Year 11 applications to sixth form

We will be setting Bridging Projects for those students who are continuing into our Sixth Form. These will be based on the work that you will be doing if you are going to study for A levels or Level 3 Applied General courses at John Willmott School. The Sixth Form team will be in touch with you regarding this.

We are aware that not all of the Sixth Form interviews have taken place and want to take this opportunity to reassure students that they can contact us with queries via email and that we will put time aside to guide them to make the right choices about their next steps once we are all back in school.

Easter Break

In line with government guidance school will be open for the children of keyworkers only during the Easter holidays. Arrangements have already been made with these families. If you believe that you are classed as a keyworker and require a place for your child, then please email the enquiry line for the attention of Mr Averis. Government advice remains **"If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be as the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society."**

The phone lines will not be answered routinely because of the limited staffing within school. If you need to contact the school you will need to leave a message or email the enquiry line at enquiry@jws.bham.sch.uk this will be monitored daily.

With our very best wishes for a Happy Easter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs T Peters
Headteacher