



Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

## RE: Weekly Update

A much more substantial update this week that largely focuses on the wellbeing of students and families. As the coronavirus crisis continues, parents everywhere are struggling to keep children healthy and occupied. If you're anxious about how to protect and nurture your children through this please let us know. In the first instance, please let your child's year leader or form tutor know.

### We are here to help you

Here are tips from the Child Mind Institute's clinicians to help calm fears, manage stress and keep the peace.

How can I support my child during lockdown?

- **Talk with them about what's going on, keeping communication as open as you can.** Let them know that it's okay to feel however they feel – whether that's scared, worried, angry, sad or something else.
- **Try to answer your child's questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner.** While you don't need to know all the answers, talking things through can help them feel calmer.
- **Encourage your child to do the things that help them when they're finding things difficult.** This will be different for everyone – it could include things like doing exercise or going for a walk, watching a favourite film, reading a favourite book, cooking or baking, talking to friends, or drawing or writing.
- **Reassure them this will pass, you're there for them, and you will get through this together.** Having returned to some of their normal activities over the summer, going back into stricter measures might feel frustrating for your child. They may even be worried that things will never get better. Recognise how difficult this is, while also letting them know that the pandemic will not last forever.
- **Spend time doing a positive activity together.** This can help them to feel calmer by giving them a short break from everything that's going on. It's also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'.
- **Keep as many regular routines going as possible to help your child feel safe and secure.** This can include things like having regular times for going to bed, waking up, eating meals and doing hobbies.

Here are links to really useful resources to support home life during the lockdown:

- [Child Mind Institute](#)
- [YoungMinds](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Place2Be](#)
- [Government](#)





## Year 9 options

Our Year 9 students are now receiving regular information about the options process. We must keep to the schedule for making options choices as this is an important part of building the school timetable for September.

The choice of courses to study in Years 10 and 11 are vital and will shape the options available post-16 and well beyond. We want to ensure that we are doing everything possible to support students and families to make well-informed decisions given the lockdown. To that end, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January will be a taster day for Year 9 to experience sessions from options subjects. Therefore, the regular timetable will be suspended for Year 9 on this day. Mr Johnson will be writing to Year 9 parents with more details shortly.

**In order to facilitate this important day for Year 9, there will be no live lessons for other year groups on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>. Independent work will be set for Years 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 & 13 via Teams for that day.** This will allow us to free up staff to deliver the Year 9 taster sessions. It will also serve as a useful 'catch-up day' for students to ensure that they are up to date with all of the work set in the first half of this half-term, which we hope will reduce anxiety.

Year 9 students and parents will be invited to attend a live meeting with Mr Baker, Mr Whitehouse and me at 7pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February to hear an overview of the process and to have the opportunity to ask any questions (via the chat function).

## Remote learning feedback

I have been very pleased to hear from parents over the last fortnight. I'd like to remind everyone of the feedback form that Mrs Fyfe launched in her letter last week. If you have anything you would like to share with us about remote learning then please use this [link](#).

## Free school meals

I trust that all eligible families received their Tesco voucher last weekend. The government has now reactivated the Edenred national voucher scheme that operated during the first lockdown and, as this scheme allows parents to use the supermarket of their choice, we will revert to this. New vouchers will be issued weekly.

## GCSE and A-level teacher assessment consultation

The Department for Education and Ofqual are preparing to consult on plans to use teacher assessments in place of traditional exams. We will contribute to this consultation and will keep you informed of developments.

There remains much uncertainty; information currently available suggests that there may be smaller exams sat in school over summer. It is vital that all students in Years 11 and 13 continue to remain fully engaged with their learning. There are suggestions that assessments will take place late into the summer term, so it is clear that the students currently in 11 and 13 will not have the early end to the school year as was experienced last year.





## **Vulnerable children and children of critical workers**

The government has now revised its advice and is asking that critical worker children only attend school if there are no alternatives. We remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, who complete the same online learning as all students. Should you have a child who requires access to this provision please email using [covid@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:covid@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk) so that we can discuss the arrangements.

## **Covid-19 testing in school**

We are continuing to prepare for a return to school. Although we have no new guidance, we feel it is likely that the government will attempt to implement school testing at some point in the future. Therefore, if you have not yet completed the online survey to give consent for your child to be tested then please do so by clicking this [link](#). To save us chasing you, if you do not give consent for your child to be tested please inform us via [covid@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:covid@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk).

The national news continues to look grim at present and I certainly hope that we begin to see the benefit of this lockdown in the government's statistics soon. I don't underestimate how challenging this time can be (I have two secondary school age children and I know that supporting them and working can be hard). It's important that we all try to find time for self-care. I want to reassure you all that we are working on our planning so that, when the students do return, we can build on the great work that you and your children are doing at home.

Best wishes,

**Nick McSweeney**

Headteacher

