



20 May 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

I wrote to all parents on 18th March to explain how the school would communicate and set work for students during the period of school closure that was due to begin on Friday 20th March. There have been a number of significant developments from that point on and I would like to offer a general update about the action that the school has taken, with specific advice for the families of students in each of our year groups.

Learning at Home

We are very keen for students to work hard in their time away from school and to think carefully about the support that they need. There are a significant number of resources on the Home Learning section of the website. These resources are organised by subject and then by year group. There are also resources for Year 11 and Year 13 students to help them with the next steps that they need to take to further study or employment. In addition to the Home Learning resources, teachers have also made contact with Year 10 and Year 12 students via Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams is part of our school system and allows students to be in direct contact with their teachers. This means that teachers can set work based upon the home learning resources, create extension tasks and offer students feedback.

At present, the majority of Year 12 students are engaging with teachers via Teams and an increasing number of Year 10 students. However, not everyone is checking the website and responding to emails. If you are unsure about how to support your child, it would be sensible to sit down with them to review the work that they have completed, to check if they can use Microsoft Teams, and to help them identify questions for their teachers. Students should follow their daily timetable and, if possible, log on to their subject Teams on the days that they have those lessons. Our teachers will not always be able to respond immediately, but they will answer questions, offer help on Home Learning resources and set tests and assessments. If you have any IT issues with accessing school email accounts or Teams please contact:
homeworkingsupport@durhamjohnston.org.uk

There is a user guide for Teams included with this letter and there are a number of additional user guides that you might find helpful on the school website.

Year 7 & Year 8 Students - Our younger students will have found their absence from school very difficult. They are used to playing with friends and studying new subjects. We will take great care to support students when they return to school and will balance their well-being with modifications to the KS3 curriculum. We will consider what emotional support they need and identify any gaps in their knowledge, or the skills needed for individual subjects. Their teachers are currently making contact via Microsoft Teams and will start to review the work that they have completed to this point and answer any questions that they have. Form teachers will continue to contact them to check on their well-being.

Year 7 and 8 students need to:

- Make sure that they can log on to the school network using their school username and password and in particular to check their school emails.
- If they have any IT issues, they need to contact the email address identified in the communication section of this letter.
- They should identify any questions or issues with their work and ask subject teachers for help and support.
- They should keep a weekly diary of the work that they have completed and the questions that they have for their subject teachers.



Headteacher: A J O'Sullivan BA, MA

Deputy Head: R McFadden MEng

Director of Resources: H Charlton BA, MBA

Assistant Heads: J Bell BSc, MA

S A F McArdle BSc

N Weaver BA

M J Wright BA



Parents can help by:

- Making sure that Year 7 and Year 8 students can access to their school email account and Microsoft Teams.
- Contacting the appropriate email address if their child has an IT issue that is limiting their ability to access material.
- Discussing each subject with their child to identify what support and additional guidance is needed when they return to school.

The school will:

- Continue to contact students via Microsoft Teams to offer support, set work and assess student progress.
- Plan ways to test students so that their understanding of the work completed so far can be assessed.
- Plan next year's calendar very carefully, thinking about the best points in the year for reporting, parents evening, mentoring and curriculum support.
- Ask all Subject Leaders to think very carefully about how to support students upon their return, to consolidate knowledge and to address any misconceptions or gaps that students may have.

Year 9 - Year 9 students made their options choices in January 2020 and are due to start GCSE courses in September in nearly all subjects. They have already started to complete their GCSE in RE, which is completed across 3 years, and were due to start the more detailed Science GCSE in April 2020. Subject teachers will contact all Year 9 students by 1st June via Microsoft Teams or email. It is sensible for Year 9 students to prioritise the subjects that they have chosen for their GCSE options and to also start to look at the Year 10 GCSE materials in those subject areas too. They should focus in particular on Science and RE.

Year 9 students need to:

- Make sure that they can log on to the school network using their school username and password and in particular to check their school emails.
- If they have any IT issues, they need to contact the email address identified in the communication section of this letter.
- They should identify any questions or issues with their work and ask subject teachers for help and support.
- They should keep a weekly diary of the work that they have completed and the questions that they have for their subject teachers.

Parents can help by:

- Making sure that Year 9 students can access to their school email account and Microsoft Teams.
- Contacting the appropriate email address if their child has an IT issue that is limiting their ability to access material.
- Discussing each subject with their child to identify what support and additional guidance is needed when they return to school, with a specific emphasis on their GCSE options choices.

The school will:

- Continue to contact students via Microsoft Teams to offer support, set work and assess student progress.
- Plan ways to test students so that their understanding of all elements of the GCSE options choices can be assessed.
- Plan the Year 10 calendar very carefully, thinking about the best points in the year for reporting, parents evening, mentoring and curriculum support.
- Ask all Subject Leaders to think very carefully about how to support students upon their return, to consolidate knowledge and to address any misconceptions or gaps that students may have.

Year 10 - Year 10 students are, rightly, the focus of current Government thinking about 'face to face' contact, as they have completed part of their GCSE course, but have missed time with their teachers. It is important to keep in mind that all GCSE students have been affected in the same

way and that Ofqual are currently reviewing how best to support Year 10 students as they progress to Year 11. They have discussed hosting exams later in the year, modifying exam content and using in school assessment so that students aren't disadvantaged. We will update you as soon as decisions are made on any national changes that might be introduced for 2020-21. The Year 10 resources on the website are linked very specifically to the GCSE specifications for each subject and students have been communicating with their teachers via Microsoft Teams and email for two weeks now. Students should identify any questions that they have based upon the Home Learning resources and stay in regular contact.

Year 10 students need to:

- Make sure that they can log on to the school network using their school username and password and in particular to check their school emails.
- If they have any IT issues, they need to contact the email address identified in the communication section of this letter.
- They should identify any questions or issues with their work and ask subject teachers for help and support.
- They should keep a weekly diary of the work that they have completed and the specific questions that they have for their subject teachers, particularly regarding content or exam technique.

Parents can help by:

- Making sure that Year 10 students can access their school email account and Microsoft Teams.
- Contacting the appropriate email address if their child has an IT issue that is limiting their ability to access material.
- Discussing each GCSE subject with their child to identify what support and additional guidance is needed.

The school will:

- Continue to contact students via Microsoft Teams to offer support, set work and assess student progress.
- Plan for 'face to face' contact in some form with students prior to the summer holidays, if safe to do so.
- Plan ways to test students so that their understanding of all elements of the GCSE subjects in Year 10 can be assessed.
- Plan carefully for a return to school and for students to receive 1-to-1 support.
- Plan the Year 11 calendar very carefully, thinking about the best points in the year for trial exams, reporting, parents evening, mentoring and revision classes.
- Ask all Subject Leaders to think very carefully about how to support students upon their return, to consolidate knowledge and to address any misconceptions that students may have.

Key dates:

- 28th May, when the Government will confirm whether or not primary schools should open as of 1st June. This will be a helpful indicator of what is possible in secondary schools.
- 5th June, when the Government will assess the success of primary school re-opening and will confirm their plans for secondary schools to have 'some face to face time' with GCSE and A Level students.

Year 11 - Year 11 have been significantly affected by the closure of schools and subsequent decisions made by Ofqual (the exam board regulator) and the Department for Education. By now, our Year 11 students would have started their exams and would be revising thoroughly. They would also be preparing for their next steps, whether A Level study at Durham Johnston, employment or additional study at another college. There are a number of things that Year 11 students need to do before the end of the school year, there are some dates to be aware of and there are also things that the school will commit to.

Year 11 students need to:

- Use the transition to A Level materials on the website and check emails regularly.
- Contact the 6th form team via the admissions email address if there are any changes to the subjects that you intend to study, or if they need additional guidance or advice.
- Contact Mr Simpson and Mr Kennedy to get support if you have any questions about next steps or need careers advice.

Parents can help by:

- Making sure that Year 11 students have firm plans for September 2020 and contacting the school if they have any questions.
- Making sure that Year 11 students are completing transition materials and requesting additional material if appropriate.
- Make a note of 20th August 2020 when GCSE results will be available for students.

The school will:

- Continue to review all of the evidence that we have prior to 20th March to make informed decisions about student grades.
- Contact students with arrangements when we are clear about the safety of a return to school and any arrangements for induction open day, which is usually scheduled for the summer term.
- Arrange for a leaver's ceremony and for students to meet up as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Endeavour to re-arrange the Year 11 Prom in the new academic year, hopefully in September. We will advise about the Yearbook in due course.

Key dates:

- Initial confirmation of options choices for Durham Johnston 6th Form to be confirmed by 1st June 2020.
- GCSE results will be made available for students on 20th August 2020. Additional information regarding results day will follow in the summer term.

Year 12 - Year 12 students would usually be completing internal exams at this time of year, with a small number of external exams too. The summer period is usually characterised by revision, university open day visits, completing course work, finishing Year 12 work and moving onto the first work associated with Year 13. To give students confidence in their academic potential, we had planned to build a formal examination period into this pre-summer period. However, recognising the range of circumstances students are facing that could compromise this objective, including sharing computers / Wi-Fi, we have asked departments to build in subject-appropriate assessments. These assessments will support students in consolidating their Year 12 work and make progress with preparation towards summary assessments in Year 13. This means that students can ask questions and get direct support from the teachers which we feel will be more beneficial in the long-term. We are also planning on how to deliver the 'face to face' contact that has been suggested should take place at some point in the summer term. We have added Y13 materials to the website, enrichment activities and guidance about university applications and plan to offer a variety of other online talks and sessions that will help them in terms of deepening their subject knowledge and thinking carefully about their next steps.

Year 12 students need to:

- Use the subject resources on the website and engage with the work set by teachers via Teams / email
- Respect assessment deadlines.
- Continue with university research and preparation activities e.g. virtual Open Days.
- Start completing their university application form with UCAS, following the guidance in Mrs Lennon's email of 20th May.
- Build regular checking of emails and Teams into their daily routine.
- Contact Mrs Lennon or Mr Wilbraham with any questions or if you require additional support.

Parents can help by:

- Helping students do the above and encouraging them to develop a balanced routine that includes regular work, physical activity and safe socialising into their daily routines.
- Encourage students to check their emails regularly.

The school will:

- Continue to contact students via Microsoft Teams and email to set and assess work to help students make progress with their learning.
- Ask all Subject Leaders to build opportunities for consolidation and clarification of knowledge into their departmental plans for when we return to lessons.
- Plan for 'face to face' contact in some form with students prior to the summer holidays, if safe to do so.
- Continue to provide guidance, advice and opportunities to help students make best choices for Year 13 and life after sixth form
- Update students regularly with relevant information using email and our website.
- Contact students with arrangements when we are clear about a safe return to school.

Year 13 - Many of our Year 13 students have been at the school for 7 years and it was very difficult for them to leave in such uncertain circumstances. They have been significantly affected by the closure of schools and subsequent decisions made by Ofqual (the exam board regulator) and the Department for Education. By now our Year 13 students would have started their exams and would now be revising thoroughly, in order to get the grades needed for university, employment or an apprenticeship. Our main focus at present is on offering any additional support that students need and helping with any queries that they have about their next steps.

Year 13 students need to:

- Build regular checking of emails and Teams into their daily routine.
- Engage with their chosen universities and UCAS. Arrange accommodation and student finance.
- Contact Mrs Lennon or Mr Wilbraham with any questions or if they require additional support.

Parents can help by:

- Helping students do the above and encouraging them to develop a balanced routine that includes regular work, physical activity and safe socialising into their daily routines.
- Encourage students to check their emails regularly.

The school will:

- Update students regularly with relevant information using email and our website.
- Continue to review all of the evidence that we have prior to 20th March to make informed decisions about student grades.
- Continue to provide guidance, advice and opportunities to help students make best choices for results and life after sixth form.
- Arrange for an opportunity for students to meet up and celebrate their time with us, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Communication with the School

Listed below are a number of useful email addresses if you need to contact the school. Please use the following email addresses if:

Your child is having issues logging onto their school email account or Microsoft Teams:	homeworkingsupport@durhamjohnston.org.uk
You are a designated Key Worker and have a question:	keyworkers@durhamjohnston.org.uk
You have a query about Free School Meals:	fsmprovision@durhamjohnston.org.uk
You are a Y11 student and have a query about your 6 th form options:	sixthformadmissions@durhamjohnston.org.uk
You have a child in Year 6 and have a question about transition:	year6-7transition@durhamjohnston.org.uk
Finally, if you have a general enquiry:	school@durhamjohnston.org.uk

The school also regularly posts updates on Twitter, the school website and via the Durham Johnston App. We would encourage all members of the school community to follow us on Twitter (@durhamjohnston), download the Durham Johnston App (instructions enclosed) and to check the website regularly.

Additional Information

Key Workers – The school has been open since 23rd March for the children of key workers. Our provision will continue to be in place throughout the summer term.

Free School Meals – We have been in regular contact with our families entitled to Free School Meals. In March we chose to source vouchers directly and that has proven to be a very effective method of making sure that families have what they need. We are currently preparing to deliver our third set of monthly vouchers. Please contact the school if your circumstances have changed, or if you have a query.


School Trips & Visits – All trips and visits that were planned between Easter 2020 and February 2021 have been cancelled and we are currently assessing the cost of each trip and returning deposits to families. This is not something that we have had to do before and the process will take time. Thank you for your ongoing patience. We will continue to offer updates on refunds for specific trips as we go forward.

Transition & Induction – Year 6 and Year 12 induction days will not be possible in their usual format in the summer term. However, we will write to all Year 6 families in June to share resources and to answer questions. We will work closely with primary schools to share information, will support the students coming to Durham Johnston and will keep parents fully informed. The 6th form will continue to support those joining us in Year 12 and we are planning additional support for both year groups in September 2020. Information and resources are available on the school website under the heading *New Starters*.

We hope to re-open for 'face to face' contact in some form with Year 10 and Year 12 students at some point in June and for all students in September. However, that will clearly be subject to potential change, quite possibly between the writing of this letter and the point at which you are reading it. I would encourage you to check the website for regular updates and to use the email addresses that have been shared for specific queries.

Thank you for your ongoing support and best wishes to your families.

Yours faithfully



A J O'Sullivan
Headteacher