



Friday, 22 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we come to the end of half-term I have found myself wondering when we have ever gone through such turbulent times. I would first of all like to give my thanks to all the parents who have emailed and kept in touch to say how much they appreciate the hard work that teachers are doing to keep things going. We, in turn, would like to give you our heartfelt thanks for the incredibly difficult job that you are doing each day at home.

Schools aren't closed, they are just working in a very different way and it's something we've all taken a long while to get our heads around. We sincerely hope that it doesn't continue for an extended period as we really miss the students (and secretly we think they might miss us too!). I'm sure you would therefore publicly want to join with me in thanking all of our staff for their commitment, imagination and determination for the continued education of our young people.

We have closed the school to all students for the half term week and we are not expecting them to complete any schoolwork during that time. During the closure we will be deep cleaning and disinfecting many areas of the school using our staff and professional external providers. We will also be risk assessing and compliance checking the school to help us to make informed decisions after the 1st June.

The weather forecast is good and everyone needs some time to exercise, get outdoors make use of some of the relaxed lockdown rules. Again, just a plea here from our community representatives for students not to congregate in large groups and to respect the social distancing rules that are still in force.

From Monday 1st June we will remain open for the children of keyworkers and our most vulnerable students. If you require a place, even if it is not for the whole week can you please contact school using;

keyworker@waseleyhills.worcs.sch.uk

If you have not used this service before and find you now need some help then first check the qualifying criteria at GOV.UK;

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-secondary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Once you have checked this then please let the school know your requirements as early as possible. This really helps with our planning for groups of children, which classrooms to use for social distancing and our other in-school arrangements.

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Opening to year groups

We will not be opening from Monday 1st June immediately to students from years 10 and 12. Many thanks to the parents who have responded to the questionnaire for these two year groups; your feedback is vital. We are planning how we can have more students in school but this has to be done in a safe manner that is acceptable to everyone. We will be making a further decision on our next steps by Friday June 12th and we will let parents and students know in good time of any changes or developments.

In the meantime from June 8th we will have the facility for students to receive online support from their teachers with the school work they have been doing at home. It is for this reason that we have invested heavily in doubling our school broadband bandwidth and providing all of our students with Microsoft Office 365 through their new school email system. This development is not intended to replace teaching or the vital contact with teachers that all children need but we are certain it will benefit all of our students, both now and with their future work.

If you need specific help with work at the moment then please contact Mr Baker through his school email or telephone reception from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We will make sure that your query is passed on to the relevant member of staff and dealt with quickly to provide support.

Laptops for students

You will have also heard from the news that the government is supporting students with technology and new laptops. This measure is designed to help students that are at a disadvantage as they can't access the school website and the online work that has been set.

Unfortunately, there is always the small print and on this occasion the laptops are only available for year 10 students and a very small minority of students from other year groups that qualify. We are expecting this 'tech' equipment to be delivered into school in the second week in June. Sadly, the government is providing only 50% of the laptops that we know students need and we will contact parents after the half term holiday to let them know where the laptops will be allocated.

Some students will undoubtedly be disappointed but the decision regarding laptop provision is out of the school's hands. If any year 12 student finds themselves in a position where access to technology is a barrier to continued learning, then some funding is available through the sixth form bursary system and I would welcome any inquiries from parents of a sixth form student that may need this help.

Food Bank

Catshill Baptist Church is very kindly supplying families with food parcels, should you feel you are in a position of crisis or hardship. If you would like to access this service please email the school office (office@waseleyhills.worcs.sch.uk). Please do not contact the Baptist Church directly, as they would like all referrals to come from a central point. Once they have received



the request from school, they will contact you directly to arrange a time for them to deliver the parcel to your doorstep.

For those families that have been receiving vouchers in lieu of free school meal we have continued this over the half term week to help with providing children's meals.

Mental Health Support for Families

Worcestershire have relaunched their 'Now We're Talking' campaign to highlight that mental health services are here for you and to urge people of all ages to seek support as soon as they need it. There is help and guidance for both parents and children; they have even launched Silver Cloud which offers a selection of online therapy modules to help reduce stress and anxiety. <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/now-were-talking/>

Online Safety

With screen time increasing for children, it is important to continue to reflect upon measures to ensure they are safe online. ThinkYouKnow continue to publish weekly activity packs for children to complete, which are filtered and adapted by age group. There is also a helpful parent/carer video which gives some sound advice around parental controls on different devices.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/support-tools/home-activity-worksheets>

Please take care over the spring bank holiday week; make the most of the nice weather and the opportunity to get outdoors. We all look forward to a different set of circumstances when we can return to normal albeit perhaps the "new" normal.

Yours faithfully

A. W. Roll

Mr A W Roll
Headteacher