



Biddenham

International School & Sports College

Principal: Mr David Bailey

Head of School: Ms Eleanor Grylls

8th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Well, what a difference a week makes! On the 31st December we were facing a staggered start to the new term and were planning our approach to mass testing all students and staff in school. Fast forward to Monday 4th January and we hear the prime minister's announcement of another period of national lockdown. Full government guidance on the lockdown can be found [here](#).

From Tuesday, the vast majority of students began remote learning from home as part of a national response to tackle the surge in a new variant of the Covid-19 virus and to avoid overwhelming the NHS. This is expected to remain in place until further notice, but the hope is that we should be in a position to return to school after the February half term. Mass testing is at the centre of the government's plans for returning to school safely as soon as possible, so the considerable planning that the school has already undertaken will ensure that we are well prepared for this.

This is indeed a fast moving situation and tough decisions are being made that have a significant impact on schools and young people. However, it is important to remember that we are in a much better position than we were in the first lockdown of March last year. We know that this period of partial closure should be shorter and we know that there is a vaccination programme on the way. So, in the coming weeks it is vital that we keep the wellbeing of our young people at the centre of what we do through regular contact and support, provide every child with access to high quality remote learning and ensure students who were due to take examinations this summer have the guidance and support that they need.

Remote learning

Over the past few months staff and students have learned so much together about teaching and learning remotely. We have invested in an upgrade to our Google suite and hope to be bringing you even more interactive ways of learning over the coming weeks. This is just a reminder that the remote learning provision will follow students' usual timetable including tutor time at the beginning of every day. It should be accessible through the google classrooms for each of the subjects, tutor time and year groups. We will be monitoring engagement and attendance closely in the interest of maintaining good progress, so if any student needs reminding of their timetable or needs support they should contact their tutor, in the first instance.

Although, learning online is a very different experience, it is important to remember that respectful behaviour and conduct is always important. [Here is a link](#) to Google meet code of conduct for students, that has been designed to ensure online learning runs smoothly and that attempts to disrupt the learning of others is minimised. We ask that you help us by reinforcing these expectations with your children. We will be evaluating our provision regularly and will communicate any adjustments needed, if necessary.

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Google services can be accessed on chromebooks, laptops, desk tops, tablets and mobile phones with internet access. There is a guide to help with this on the website, which can also be accessed at [Accessing google services from home](#). Additionally, there are lots of helpful resources for remote learning on our website, which can be accessed [here](#). If you have any issues with accessing remote learning, including problems with chromebooks or wifi please let us know by email at enquiries@biddenham.beds.sch.uk including your child's name and year group, or call 01234 342521.

Wellbeing

With students spending an increased amount of time accessing online resources and sites, we need to remember to support them in staying safe online. Here are some links to useful guidance and support for secondary school age children:

- [Thinkuknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Net-aware](#) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)

We appreciate that time in lockdown can be a difficult time and want to make sure that your child's well-being is protected. Students and parents can contact us on clare.warburton@biddenham.beds.sch.uk if they are anxious or worried during lockdown, and we will try our best to provide support.

Free School Meals

The government has undertaken to reinstate the voucher system that was set up in the previous lockdown, although we are still awaiting the details. If your child is eligible for free school meals, we will be in contact as soon as possible with the details and apologise for the delay. If you need any further information, or if your situation has changed and you think you may have become eligible very recently, please contact enquiries@biddenham.beds.sch.uk including your child's name and year group, or call 01234 342521.

Examinations

The Education Secretary has so far confirmed that GCSEs, AS and A Level exams will not go ahead this summer. Although students and families in Year 11, 12 and 13 will rightly be concerned about the arrangements to replace them, he has gone on to state that he 'wishes to use a form of teacher-assessed grades, with training and support provided to ensure these are awarded fairly and consistently.' The government and Ofqual have not yet released details of how this will work, but we will update you as soon as this happens. In the meantime it is important that every student understands that we will continue to deliver the curriculum and prepare them for whatever type of assessment that will be used to award their qualifications. We will be encouraging students to produce good quality work that demonstrates their learning. Students must try to remain positive, continue to engage in their learning and remember that all they have learned, and the skills they have developed, are still very important and will be needed to progress to the next phase of their lives.

January exams

We will be going ahead with any external exams scheduled for January, as we have smaller cohorts and testing in place that make it safe to do so. Further details have already been shared directly with students and parents who are sitting those exams.

Even though we are better prepared for this lockdown it is understandable if you and your children feel anxious and frustrated. We are here for you every step of the way if you need us as we work through this together, so please do get in touch with us if there is anything you need. We would also love to hear from you with good news stories, achievements that make us proud, examples of beautiful work and simple acts of kindness to share with our Biddenham School family.

We'll be in touch again very soon, in the meantime take good care.

Warm regards



Mr D Bailey
Principal



Ms E Grylls
Head of School