

15th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

As we reach the end of the second week of term, I write to keep you informed about our remote learning.

TEAMS lessons

Students have done well this week to engage with the lessons using the new timetable and I hope that the structure that this offers is helping students to manage their time effectively. Inevitably, there have been some teething issues as both staff and students become more and more familiar with TEAMS. Classcharts should now show the revised timetable for all students and an overview is also provided on the school website for reference. Students have done well to be on time and to complete tasks and I would urge them to maintain this impressive start. Students will be rewarded via classcharts for good work and completion of tasks.

Attendance

Teaching staff are recording which students are attending lessons and so far this week 94% of students have engaged with lessons. Where a student is unable to attend lessons because of appointments or illness then they should contact their Year Leader via email. We will contact you if students are not engaging with any lessons to see how we can support them.

School Meal Vouchers

We have switched from the food hampers to vouchers for those entitled to free school meals and these will be sent to the email address that the school has on file. The vouchers will come directly from ASDA. Please do look in any junk email folders if the voucher does not appear. Vouchers will be issued for two weeks at a time. There has been a lot of coverage in the media this week about support during the half term. Please do not worry about this as this was already agreed before Christmas and is being funded by the Council.

Exercise Books

We know that the period of lockdown will run until at least half term. We are aware that students may not have all of their exercise books at home and so we have posted an exercise book home for every student. They can use this for any subjects over the next few weeks.

Key worker places

We continue to offer places to key worker families but must have places booked in advance to allow us to staff the school site adequately. It is at times like this that students realise how important school is and many have wanted to come in. We are

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only able to offer places to those who meet the criteria in order to reduce the transmission of the virus. The weekly booking form will close at **3pm every Wednesday** for the following week and you will need to complete this on a weekly basis. We are unable to accept students who have not booked a place as a result of staffing. Next week some of the year groups are approaching 30 students and so we really do need your help to only request a place if you cannot keep students at home. We have had a number of families who have booked places and then students have not attended. We need your help to avoid this please so we can help those families who must have the places as they are front line emergency services staff.

Testing and consent forms

The testing programme continues to run in school for staff and key worker students. Thank you to everyone who has completed and returned the consent form. We have placed a word version of the document on the school website in the remote Learning section. This should make it easier to complete electronically and then we ask that you return it to covidconsent@thetauntonacademy.com . This will mean that when students can return to school we will be ready to test students which will provide further reassurance to our community. As the week ends, we have now conducted well over 200 tests and it really does seem to offer personal reassurance to staff and students.

Wellbeing

As I said in my letter last week, these periods of lockdown bring with them additional stress and anxiety. It is therefore very important that students have a clear break from school work. Students should not need to be working into the evening or the weekends if they use their time wisely during the week. They should try to take advantage of any opportunities for exercise and to remain in contact with their friends during this time. There are some organisations to support with mental health if required and details are on the school website in the remote learning section. I have directed staff to work from home where possible and to limit the staffing that we have on the school site each day. They have been working incredibly hard to do all they can to provide the best experience possible. They will be available to respond to emails but please do not expect a response after 5pm in the evenings or at weekends so that they can have a break as well.

Reports

Before Christmas, staff started to enter progress grades and we will be sending out a report for all year groups late next week. Even though things are harder with remote learning we are trying to do all we can to make sure that students still make the progress that they should to maximise their potential.

We are very grateful for the many messages of support we have received. Remote learning is far from ideal for any of us, but I hope that you feel what we are providing is making the best of the situation. Although we are apart physically, I feel that in many ways as a school community we have never been closer and I am very proud of our staff and students. I wish you all a happy and peaceful weekend.

Kind regards



Mr J Eddy
Head Teacher