27th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers and Students

In my haste to get the newsletter out on Friday, I included the new schedules / timetables but did not provide you with a full explanation around them. I apologise for this and do hope that the following will help you to understand why we have made these changes and how they will work.

When schools were informed they were to close, we were given very little time to plan and arrange how we would continue to provide learning at a distance and we did our very best for the two weeks before Easter. In line with most other schools across the country, we did our best to carry on as if we were at school by trying to keep to the same timetable and to provide as much work as we thought was appropriate.

We listened to your comments and feedback and spoke to the teachers about how they were finding this way of working. For some of our families it was straightforward to move from classroom to home but for many it has been a huge challenge. We know that many of you are sharing laptops and mobile phones in order to access the work. We know that some of you have been ill, others are caring for people who are ill. Everyone is worried about the situation. Some of you have younger siblings who disturb your work, some of you have older siblings who are helping you with your work. Some parents are out at work all day and other parents are working from home. For some families school work has been one step too far as they cope with the situation, in others it has been the stability and routine that they have needed.

In short – everyone is different and it is not possible for all students to follow a rigid timetable each day.

We do think that establishing a routine is important, whatever your circumstances. Therefore we have altered our timetables and made them simpler and less time constrained. We have lengthened the sessions so that there is more opportunity for independent work, often away from the computer, and reduced the number of sessions in a day. All the new timetables can be found on the school website.

We have asked teachers, wherever it is possible, to post all of the work for the day onto Show My Homework by 9am so that it is possible to organise your day around your family’s needs. We have also asked them to aim for about 50% revision work to review your prior learning and 50% new work to make sure that you are moving your learning forwards at the same time.

In Years 7, 8 & 9, we would like you to do 3 sessions of work a day – each of about 1 – 1.5 hours.

In Year 10, we would like you to do 2 sessions of work a day – each of about 2 hours.

In the Sixth Form, we are again running 2 sessions of work a day, but expect you, as normal, to be doing considerably more independent research and review in between classes. With Year 12, the smaller groups lend themselves at times to some live teaching and, where possible and appropriate, some teachers will be arranging either live sessions through Skype or will be on hand to respond to emails directly.
For everyone it is important to continue to find regular time to get and stay fit, so we recommend at least 30 minutes a day of exercise for everyone. It is also vitally important to read for pleasure in order to extend your vocabulary, your general knowledge and, of course, your enjoyment of reading. Please try to find at least 30 minutes a day to dedicate to quiet reading on your own and to use this opportunity to read a range of authors and genres.

Each week we are setting PHSE tasks – make sure that you do these too.

I do hope that this helps to explain the changes that we have put into place and that you find this an easier way to engage in the important learning that your teachers are setting you.

Yours faithfully

Cath Smith
Executive Headteacher