

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of this Spring half term, it saddens me that we are still in a period of lockdown and I have yet to be able to meet our pupils face to face in 2021. However, I hope that you are all keeping safe and well in a bid that we can move back to some normality soon. The beginning of this half term was extremely busy getting our online learning platform up and running. We are very grateful for your patience while we adapted our practice to deliver online learning activities. I wanted to thank parents and carers for supporting their children's home learning and I appreciate that this is not an easy task. I am delighted to report we have seen a huge increase in the number of students now regularly accessing online learning.

This half term, you will have had at least one telephone call home from the school checking in with your child and their well-being. The calls will resume again from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February and please do use these calls to raise any concerns or ask any questions that you may have. The member of staff may not have all the answers immediately, but they will then feedback to Heads of House, members of the Senior Leadership team and/or class teachers.

### Online Learning/Remote Learning

Many of you, I know, will be disappointed about the announcement earlier this month, that schools will not begin reopening until at least March 8th. Our staff are hugely sympathetic to the demands on parents and carers with the pressure of home schooling. Please try and reassure yourself that we will not let your child lose out, and as long as they try to keep up with their remote learning and ask for help when they need it, all of this one day will be, as they say, "history." The vast majority of students continue very successfully with their online learning and I would like to add my personal thanks to everyone who has worked tirelessly to make this happen

When I wrote to you at the beginning of term, I explained that we have improved our online learning offer. I am aware that there are some schools offering a high number of "live" online classes following a standard timetabled day. Whilst we do deliver some live lessons each day, there are some considerations that I believe we need to be aware of. Offering and attendance of these lessons are two very different things. The engagement in these lessons is purely dependent on whether a child has access to a computer/device at that specific time. We are aware that a significant number of children share a laptop with siblings and/or parents working from home, so the pressure of needing the laptop at a given time would cause a significant pressure on the family unit. Unfortunately, at this point, we do not have a 1 to 1 device scheme that means all children have their own laptop, but the Academy is endeavouring to acquire more Government devices.



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Essentially, we must ensure that teaching is available to ALL children of Washwood Heath Academy, not just those that are fortunate enough to have sole access to a laptop/device. For Secondary pupils, there is a blend of live lessons and pre-recorded lessons. Each pupil has a personal school email address and login and password to access 'ClassDojo' (Primary), 'Show My Homework (Secondary) and Microsoft Teams. Some pupils also have passwords to other APPs too including 'Times Tables Rockstars' 'GCSEPod' etc. When you consider that only a few short years ago this would not even have been an option for learning, and whilst never a substitute for face to face teaching, amidst the chaos of the world we are currently living in this is a fantastic stop-gap which will ensure we continue to deliver the best possible education to all our pupils. It is not ideal and I hope that all children will be able to return to school in the near future. Furthermore, it is important to stress that I know families are doing their very best and I appreciate everyone's efforts.

In addition to online learning, pupils have had access to 'Spring Work Packs' which went home with pupils in December 2020 and/or parents/carers were invited to collect them from school this half term. 'Spring Work Packs' are still available in school for collection, for all year groups and please email [enquiry@washwood.academy](mailto:enquiry@washwood.academy) if you would like to arrange a time to collect a 'Spring Work Pack' from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

### Places for Key Workers and Vulnerable children

Throughout the pandemic we have remained open to children of Key Workers and vulnerable children. I would like to thank the staff who have come in to support our students, often putting their own children into Key Worker care themselves. I have been pleased that we have been able to welcome children into school, but I must reiterate that if a child is able to be at home, it is currently the safest place for them to be. We see the glimmer of hope with the vaccinations, but Birmingham remains high in terms of transmission. We await news from the Government regarding being able to re-open after half term, from March 8<sup>th</sup> at the earliest and I expect the Prime Minister to give an update on February 22<sup>nd</sup> about a possible re-opening of school for some children from March 9<sup>th</sup>. Obviously, I will keep you all updated as and when I have more information.

### Spring Half Term

During the Spring half term holiday (Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February) school will be closed to ALL pupils. Vulnerable children and Key Workers' children should return to school on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Please continue to use the school email enquiry during this period: [enquiry@washwood.academy](mailto:enquiry@washwood.academy) and a member of staff will contact you within 48 hours.



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**Headteacher:** Mrs. L Petrie

**CEO:** Dr. B Mabey

## Reports, Parents Evening & Options Evenings

We are very excited to be launching our online Parents' Evening events via School Cloud in the coming weeks. This will give you an opportunity to meet with staff and discuss progress and any concerns you may have. Options Evening for year 9 and Post 16 may be held online where students and parents can learn about the GCSE and A-Levels that are available to them. Further information will follow in the coming weeks.

In the second half of the Spring term, pupils in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 will complete assessments which will help teachers and pupils to have a better understanding of their progress during lockdown and remote learning. For Years 11 and 13, these assessments are likely to count towards evidence for final grades. A separate letter will be sent out to parents and carers to explain these assessments.

## And finally...

I would like to wish the Washwood family of pupils, parents and carers, teachers and support staff a restful and safe half term. We look forward to seeing our children return to remote learning on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February and hopefully back in school before too long.

Yours sincerely



Mrs L Petrie

Headteacher

