17 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

COVID 19 Update – Please read this letter carefully

I am writing to update you on Brentside’s response to the most recent government guidance and to information made available to schools through Public Health England and the Department for Education.

As you know, schools are being asked to remain open currently, but we are also being made aware that there will be school closures at some point in the future. I wanted to share with you information about how we will support student learning in both cases and also of the adaptations we as a school need to put into place in the interim.

At present we have no known diagnoses of Coronavirus within the staffing body or of staff having a family link to someone with a known case. However, we do have staff who are self-isolating and this situation, we are led to understand by the government, is likely to grow as people have now been told to self-isolate if experiencing a high temperature and/or a new, persistent cough.

Planned events:

We recently wrote to you to say that Applied Learning Day trips would not take place on Friday 20 March. In addition to this, the following will not run:

- Parent Forum on Wednesday 18 March
- Target Review Day on Thursday 26 March and instead will teach lessons in accordance with our usual timetable. The mock interviews for Year 10 will also not take place on this day.

Student health and wellbeing:

We have again shared with our students the guidance regarding hand washing, coughing or sneezing into a tissue (or in the absence of such into the arm) and also the newer guidance regarding reduced physical contact with others.

Parents and carers are asked to be vigilant and if their child has a high temperature or a new, persistent cough, students must be kept at home for 14 days. Government guidelines state that in this case, families are also requested to self-isolate for 14 days. Should this be the case, please do inform the school.

If your child is at school and presents the symptoms of a high temperature and/or new persistent cough, we will contact you and you will be required to arrange for your child to get home and from that point you should all self-isolate for 14 days, in line with government guidelines.

Current measures:

The above guidance around care and self-isolation is also being followed by our school staff. It is likely that over the coming days and weeks, we will not have enough teachers in school to teach all of our students. What follows is our information sharing on what will happen for as long as Brentside (and all schools) remains open:

[Further details would follow here, potentially including information on remote learning or other adaptations.]
Where necessary we will combine classes in the assembly hall with senior staff and students will work quietly through the work set by their teachers.

We will prioritise the learning of Year 11 and Year 13 classes because these year groups have examinations this summer. If teachers of any Year 11 or Year 13 classes are absent we will ensure that work is set for the students and will provide an appropriate environment at school for students to work through the relevant, examination focussed work.

We will be asking different year groups to remain at home to release staff to support the classes with upcoming examinations. This is because for non-examination classes, there is more time to catch up on missed learning. Please see below arrangements from today until Friday March 27:

- Wednesday 18 March: We plan to run school as usual tomorrow, but we may need to contact parents during the day to send students home earlier than usual in the afternoon.
- Thursday 19 March: Year 9 remain at home
- Friday 20 March: Year 8 remain at home
- Monday 23 March: Year 10 remain at home
- Tuesday 24 March: Year 7 remain at home.
- Wednesday 25 March: Year 9 remain at home
- Thursday 26 March: Year 8 remain at home
- Friday 27 March: Year 7 remain at home.

For the days that we require students to remain at home, work will be set by each of their teachers via Showmyhomework (smhw). All students will be reissued with their log in details and a reminder guide of how to use the tool, but the vast majority of our students use it well and frequently. We recognise that students remaining at home will impact on families, but in line with many other Ealing schools who are taking similar measures, we are making these decisions in order to keep school open, on a reduced number of staff.

On days where students are at home, we would ask that you use your child’s school timetable to monitor what work they are completing each hour at home on any days where year groups are not in school.

For any students in receipt of a free school meal, we invite those students into the main school canteen at lunch time to eat lunch. Students should be in full school uniform and must sign in at reception when they arrive. No meal will be given to students in year groups not in attendance that day unless they have an authorisation slip from reception.

In the event of an announcement of school closures nationally:

For all students in Year 7 through to Year 13, our main remote learning tool is Showmyhomework. Teachers will put work on smhw either at the same time as the timetabled lesson each day, or by 09:15 on the day of the lesson. This is to support students to manage their learning time. Resources such as web links and PowerPoints will be uploaded onto smhw to support student learning. Many students have the smhw app on their phones, or they can log in as they usually would. Parents can also log in using your log in details and this way the work is filtered to only that set for your child, or you can go in via the website and filter to find your child’s class (you need to look by class rather than by teacher as other teachers may be setting the work for your child’s class). We are asking staff, where possible, not to require prolonged access to the internet or to a computer so most students will be able to pick up the work on their phones and then work in books/on paper. Students are also able to message their teachers through smhw to ask any questions they may have and teachers will respond. Where possible we would ask students to message their teacher during the timetabled lesson time so that teachers can manage the flow of questions.
Also for all students in Years 7 to 13 school emails will be in use. Students will be given reminders of how to access and use their school email, as well as reminders and log ins for smhw. It is likely that students in some year groups will be asked to email essays to teachers and they will then receive their marked essays back via email. Parents/carers are also able to contact teachers via their school email.

For students in Years 9, 10 and 11, students have their own log ins to GCSEPod. This is a fantastic resource that provides revision materials and short film/animated clips linked directly to the examination specification that our students are studying for. This covers most subjects. Some staff will set homework on smhw that relates to GCSEPod. Subjects may have additional online learning tools (for example MathsWatch) and will signpost work set using these on smhw.

Most Year 7 and 8 students also work on Google Classroom. Again, if work is set using this tool, for example for ICT lessons, where most students are familiar with the platform, the tasks will be clearly written on smhw so that all students and parents are clear on what work is being set.

Where projects are set for students, this will still be repeatedly posted each day to remind students that they are working on a project.

We are also looking into Microsoft Teams for Year 13 learners to enable video teaching where that may be of use. Students will be introduced to this later this week if this seems a valuable addition.

Students can access the student area of the school network and their own folders. To do this they log in via the school website and Magellan. Students will be given an easy guide showing them how to do this, as some may not currently access their folders from home.

Throughout any school closure, any significant national changes will be communicated as a news item on the school website and also as an email to parents. These may relate, for example, to external examinations or the reopening of schools. We are currently sending letters home to all parents stating which email addresses we hold that are linked to your child. It is essential that we have up to date email addresses** as some emails are unfortunately returned as ‘couldn’t be delivered’. We would encourage you to return these at your earliest convenience to give us as much time as is possible to update the school system.

External Examinations

If you are in Year 11 or Year 13 and expect to take external examinations this summer the latest information we have from Ofqual, the qualifications and examinations regulator, is that schools must prepare for the summer examination series as scheduled. If there is any change to this advice we will update with further guidance as and when we receive it. Ofqual's latest statement can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/updated-statement-on-coronavirus

To conclude, this is a challenging time for us all and I am very much aware of the impact partially closing the school will have on families. It is not a decision the school has taken lightly and I would like to thank you all for your support.

Yours faithfully

Arwel Jones
Headteacher

**If you do not have an email address please let us know what the best way of communicating with you is at this difficult time.