



May 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that you are keeping safe and well during these difficult times. I trust that many of you will have watched the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday evening and this may have left you with some questions.

The Prime Minister indicated that at present no date has been set for opening secondary schools. He said that he hoped to open secondary schools to those students who are due to sit public examinations in the summer of 2021 before the summer holidays. This would mean that students currently in Year 10 may get the opportunity to attend school at some point this academic year. However, it seems increasingly unlikely that students in Year 7, 8 and 9 will return before this year's summer holidays.

As a result of this announcement it is very important that students continue to exploit the online learning opportunities that we have available. Staff at Thorns have been working extremely hard throughout these weeks to bring together all the digital resources that we have created or have been supported by partners in developing.

- Teaching staff have been delivering online lessons since schools closed at the end of March and these are ongoing every day. The timetable of daily lessons appears on our Facebook page and also on the Student Portal and subject Hub sites.
- Subject Hub and class sites are updated regularly with work for students to complete and to return to staff for marking.
- Paper based work packs are available to all students who are not able to access the online learning and are sent out to families on a weekly basis.
- Digital resources that we have purchased such as Britannica Launchpacks, Century Learning, GCSEPOD, Mathswatch, Seneca Learning and many others are all available and will support the content being delivered by teachers during online lessons.
- Form Tutors will start to deliver Form Time once a week in order to keep in contact and deliver some pastoral sessions for students. The days of these will be on the student portal.
- Over the next few weeks we will be launching competitions across the schools in our Trust and we will be releasing information about these very soon! There will be some very exciting prizes!

Students in Year 11 may also be thinking about the examinations that they were due to take this summer. Staff are currently following guidance from examination boards and Ofqual and are

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preparing information to send to the examination boards. The examination boards will then apply an additional process to the information that we supply and will then award an overall grade for each of the subjects that were being studied. Student's results will be published in the normal way on Thursday 20th August for students studying GCSE and Level 2 qualifications.

We have also been busy supporting key worker's children and children who need the additional support of school, by operating our partner academy, Shireland Collegiate Academy, as a hub school for our Trust. We are also providing care packages for children entitled to Free School Meals and it has been lovely to see some friendly faces as families have come into Thorns to receive these. Like most schools in the country we have had difficulty with the government voucher scheme. We have managed to arrange more delivery slots now and over the weekend the government have announced an upgrade to the service that will hopefully ensure that the system runs more smoothly. Staff are also in weekly contact with our more vulnerable students to monitor health and well being.

You may also have seen that staff in our Design and Technology department have been busy supporting the NHS and our local pharmacies by making nearly 3000 visors and 30 screens to help protect frontline workers.

I do want to reassure you that when we do reopen, we will be following all the guidance that the government issue. We have site staff in at present completing a deep clean of the entire site. We are making preparations for social distancing, including looking at the numbers of students that we can accommodate in a classroom, planning a one way system around the academy, amending break and lunch time routines and also routines for the start and end of the day in order to keep children and staff safe.

Finally, I hope that you remain safe and would like to remind all students to follow the latest guidance from government in relation to social distancing and keeping the virus under control.

Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Kelay
Principal

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