



May 2020

Dear Families,

I am writing to update you regarding our approach to continuing education for our students next half term.

I am aware that the last two months have been very difficult for many families. Along with the loss of routine, families have had to get used to home schooling alongside worries for our own family and friends' health and wellbeing.

You will be aware of the debate, which is currently taking place in the media regarding welcoming more students back to school after half term. This applies particularly to those children of primary age, but there has also been discussion about students from Years 10 and 12. There are widely differing views about the timing of this, but what must happen of course is that pupils and staff must be safe, and feel safe, in any provision that operates.

The government have stated:

"Secondary schools should prepare to begin some face to face contact with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning. This will not be a return to full timetables or pupils back in school or college full time, rather some support to supplement pupils' remote education."

It is clear therefore that there is no intention of a return to school for Years 7, 8 and 9 during the rest of the summer term. Y11 are, of course, not required to attend. It is also clear that there will be no wholesale return of Y10.

Unlike most other schools, staff at Thorns were well prepared to deliver remote learning opportunities. This was due to our experience of using technology that has been developed over the past few years in partnership with Shireland Collegiate Academy and the other schools within our Trust. This meant that from day one of lockdown staff have been delivering live lessons on a daily basis. We have had well over 50,000 hits on our learning gateway over the past 9 weeks. This is a wonderful achievement by everyone involved.

It is the case that we will need to continue to deliver work remotely for all year groups. We will also be conducting our face to face contact through Microsoft Teams later in the next half term. All students should receive their annual reports in the next few weeks and following this we will hold virtual Parents Evenings to review the year and set targets for the coming year. There will therefore be no need for students in Year 10 to physically attend school. In fact, to do so would undermine the great work on remote learning that has taken place so far.

This has been a steep learning curve for everyone, staff, parents and pupils, and I thank you for your help, cooperation and patience. We are committed to continue to improve this provision, since this will continue to be the main vehicle for our curriculum delivery in the coming weeks. From 1st June, we would like all pupils

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to continue to access and engage with their work via Microsoft Teams and our Hub Sites on the Learning Gateway. We will also be launching competitions for all year groups with Century Tech, Britannica and other digital partners. More details will be issued next half term.

We have continued to provide access to education, via our partnership with Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, in all years, since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. Those children attending school follow the same remote learning curriculum as the majority of pupils at home, whilst they attend the site at Shireland Collegiate Academy. It may be that as the coronavirus situation improves, more parents will require that provision. If that is the case, please will you contact the Academy to confirm your requirements.

Please could all families complete the attached survey to give the Academy an indication of your current circumstances and your key worker childcare needs. We would ask that all families complete this survey so our information is complete.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=0muv_AyHKUOlpcOgAhOJqjcFRt_BMyRCo2pghZ0qKnRUMDR_OSiBaM1JYOFZZSjZXVVQwTDg3Q1FZOC4u

We do require adequate time to prepare for additional students so it vital that you contact us prior to attendance in order to ensure that we have adequate staffing levels on site to support your children. I must emphasise that this continues to be only for children whose parents / carers are in the specified key worker categories or who are considered vulnerable. If the demand for places increases in the coming weeks, we will look at creating provision based at Thorns rather than using the site at Shireland.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank you all for your support over this difficult period. I hope that you have a good half term break and we look forward to continuing to deliver fantastic learning opportunities next half term.

Kind regards

Mr M Kelay
Principal