

29 January 2021

Re: Principal's Update

Dear parent/carer

Thank you for your on-going support as we negotiate the challenges created by the current national lockdown. I hope you and your families are safe and well and I remind you that my team and I are always available to offer support where it is required. Please contact us via telephone at the number below or on email office@dukeries.atrust.org.uk.

The Prime Minister confirmed on Wednesday that the earliest that schools would reopen, to students other than those of Key Workers and those who are vulnerable, would be Monday 8 March 2021. He has also stated that he will provide 2 weeks' notice for any wider re-opening. I will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

Remote Learning

Attendance has been exceedingly high in live lessons with over 95% of students accessing remote learning each day. We continue to ask for your support in ensuring your child logs in to every lesson, including tutor time which starts at 8.40am. We are also monitoring engagement – this includes contributing in the lesson chat, verbally answering questions, and submitting all assignments that are set. Most students are engaging fully, and our team will be in touch if your child is not meeting our expectations.

Please contact us if there are any barriers to your child accessing learning and we will do everything we can to resolve issues. To date we have distributed over 100 laptops and provided free mobile internet access. You can sign up to the national programme which provides free increases in mobile data allowances via a link from our Academy website.

<https://www.dukeries.atrust.org.uk/increase-mobile-data-allowances/>

We have now contacted over 100 families, selected at random, to seek feedback on our remote learning provision. Thank you to everyone who contributed. As result of this feedback we are finalising plans to make further adaptations to the remote learning curriculum – particular with regards to reducing screen time. My colleague, Mike Brett, will contact you next week with full details of these changes. We intend that the updated model will be implemented on Monday 8 February 2021.

My team will continue to make calls, to check-in with every student to support their well-being, whilst the Academy is not fully open.

Year 11 Vocational Exams in February 2021

The government have confirmed that the vocational exam series, due to take place in February 2021, will not go ahead. This impacts Year 11 examinations in Health and Social Care and Enterprise. The Department for Education and Ofqual are currently consulting on the process for awarding examinations grades for Year 11 and Year 13 students. I provide details of this in the next section of the letter. Please contact Mr Robinson j.robinson@dukeries.atrust.org.uk or Miss Maycock l.maycock@dukeries.atrust.org.uk if you wish to discuss this further.

Proposals for Replacing Exams in 2021

The government and the exams regulator Ofqual are currently consulting on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021. A summary of the proposals, from the consultation document are:

'We propose that in summer 2021 a student's grade in each subject will be based on their teachers' assessment of the standard at which the student is performing. In the absence of exams, teachers are best placed to assess the standard at which their student is performing.

This consultation seeks views on our proposal, including how teachers should be supported to make their assessments fairly and consistently. We propose that all students who do not believe their grade reflects the evidence of the standard at which they were performing can appeal.'

Similar work is also taking place to agree how vocational qualifications will be awarded.

I will update you again once full details of how grades are to be awarded are confirmed. I realise this situation will be causing anxiety for our students in Year 11 and Year 13. Rest assured we will do everything in our power to ensure the no Dukeries Academy student is disadvantaged and that they achieve the grades that their hard work and commitment deserves.

Students, in exam years, must ensure they continue to attend every lesson, and contribute fully. This will ensure they are well prepared for assessments, which will take place later this year, to support teachers in making accurate and evidence-based grade decisions. I thank you in advance for your support with this.

We are pleased that so many of our current Year 13 students have now applied for university and I am delighted that a number already have offers, including at Oxbridge and other prestigious Russell Group universities. We still have places available in Year 12 for next year. Year 11 students should contact Miss Hackett m.hackett@dukeries.attrust.org.uk for further information. Look out for details of our Sixth Form Virtual Open Evening on Thursday 25 February 2021.

Free School Meals

Free School Meals vouchers have now been provided to eligible families from 25 January 2021. Please contact us if you have not received your vouchers. Students who are attending on-site provision, who are eligible for FSM should ensure they bring a packed lunch or ensure funds are deposited on their School Money account to allow them to purchase lunch from the cafeteria.

Sanitary Products and Stationery

To support students whilst we are remote working, we will provide free stationery and sanitary products from next week. We intend to arrange pick-up points in Bilsthorpe, Edwinstowe and at the Academy site in Ollerton. Look out for information which will be shared early next week.

Well-being: Exercise Challenge

I have been hugely impressed by the number of students who have been taking part in our PE Enrichment Challenge. Please encourage your child to run, walk or cycle every day and submit their distance to their tutor. There is strong evidence which links exercise to good mental health and well-being. Contact our PE team if you require further information.

Finally, Mrs Mahony, our Head of Music, has left the Academy this week having spent five years at TDA. Mrs Mahony has done a fantastic job in raising the profile of music and the

arts during her time with us and will be greatly missed. We wish her and her family well on their new adventure.

Please continue to follow us on Facebook @DukeriesAcademy and Twitter @DukeriesAcad to keep up to date with the latest Academy news.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ged Rae', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr Ged Rae
Principal