



7 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

General update – Covid-19 and lateral flow testing, remote learning and live lessons, E-Platform digital library, Year 11 reports and mock examination results and parents' evening, Year 13 parents' evening, vocational examinations in Years 11, 12 and 13, careers interviews for Year 11 and 13 students, Free School Meals, School Transport arrangements, collection of books, laptops for students in need

Well it is fair to say it has been an interesting week in education...

As we end the first week of the calendar year it feels like it has continued where 2020 ended but with more pace down the hill with the brakes off. I will try to make some sense of it all below:

Covid-19 and lateral flow testing

I am going to pause on updating you of the local infection rate for a while as the national lockdown has now come into force. However, needless to say, the situation makes for grim reading. We remain determined to keep our site manageable under the circumstances when we are stretched on many fronts. We have received some requests for keyworker attendance at the Academy which simply do not meet the government regulations. We will be keeping to these rigorously so that we can offer the best service to all of our stakeholders from students and staff to parents and governors.

As you may have seen via our social media channels, lateral flow testing has begun in earnest this week for staff and any students attending site. I know the media have lambasted the government for their approach to this (and quite rightly so) but, for now, we have made a positive start in this regard. I have taken the decision during the lockdown to train up a team of internal staff rather than to go for external agency workers. My team are very well trained and exceptionally able. In my view, trust and confidence is everything at this moment in time so we will continue in this manner until such time as we return to full and active school duties, when we will consider next steps.

We have also decided to call home, where we can, to let you know that a test has taken place and a negative result has been the outcome. Although this is not in the guidance and is actively discouraged by DfE due to the scale we will be working at, we think it is useful for now. However, we can only do that while the numbers of test subjects remain quite small so please don't be offended if we do this for a short while and it peters out. I will always keep you informed but my main overriding objective is safety and wellbeing for all.

If any parents have any other concerns related to Covid-19 in school, please contact us at the Academy using the email address COVID@srpa.co.uk. This will make it directly to me where I will be able to help and will do my best to prioritise your concern.

Remote learning and live lessons

I remain determined to offer as normal a service as remote learning will allow including R2L time from 8.45am. This gives students a routine, a reason to get up and plough on and gives us sight of some fabulous youngsters each day. We all know how emotions can change from day to day for all of us, but especially children. This 'form appointment' allows students greater contact with us and is a step change from earlier remote offers.

All curriculum plans will be published in the usual manner by 9am on the Monday morning of that week. I encourage full attendance at Teams live or pre-recorded lessons wherever possible. I do encourage youngsters to behave in those sessions. My staff are working hard for you but not at the cost to the whole class. There have been some small issues this week which I am appraised of and parents have been contacted. Time to get heads down now, you know who you are.

We are seeing an increasing number of requests for paper copies of the work due to no access to the internet at home. This number has now topped 200. We cannot run a skeleton staff and offer a fifth of our main school paper copies of all work, it is simply unsustainable. If you have the internet at home, we will only be able to provide work electronically but we can look to support you with extra wifi and data services as DfE provide the details. I am in the process of receiving this and will be in touch with any families who wish to explore this as soon as possible.

EPlatform digital library

Students can continue to enjoy their learning by engaging with a broad spectrum of eBooks that will have something for everyone. Our eLibrary provides a resource to be used in lesson time too, particularly during KS3 reading lessons, enabling students to engage with a book of their choice. This continues to be a very exciting time for pupils at SRPA, despite the challenges we currently face. We welcome you to visit our eBook library with your child as you encourage the thrill of reading together, to help them explore the wonder of books.

Don't forget pupils can also access the eLibrary via the app available on Android, Apple and Microsoft by accessing the app and then searching for our Academy before logging in. Alternatively, our online library can be found here: <https://srpa.eplatform.co/>



Head Teacher: Mr D. J. Hardy BA (Hons) PGCE
Moor Lane, North Hykeham, Lincoln. LN6 9AF
☎ 01522 882020 📠 01522 880660
✉ enquiries@srpa.co.uk 🌐 www.srpa.co.uk
Company Registration No: 07690250

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Year 11 reports, mock examination results and parents' evening

Y11 reports were published today on <https://go4schools.com>. This report includes the mock examination result for each subject, alongside the target, working at and expected grades from teachers. In Art/Photography/Drama and French the 'Working at' was given to the mock examination result, in the absence of examinations in those subjects. We hope that you find this information useful. A follow up individual meeting will be held via Microsoft Teams to talk through results and areas to focus on and we look forward to discussing these with you at the Y11 parents' evening next Wednesday.

The mechanism for booking appointments will go live tomorrow morning. I know this is shorter notice than usual but, since the week before Christmas, things have been incredibly challenging. I would appreciate your understanding on this one occasion.

Year 13 parents' evening

This evening is scheduled for 20 January and we will be contacting you imminently for you to be able to make appointments.

Vocational examinations in Years 11, 12 and 13

I sent out a letter earlier today in relation to this issue with some significant detail for parents/carers and students. If there are any questions in relation to this, feel free to drop me a line, preferably via the Covid-19 email address COVID@srpa.co.uk.

Careers interviews for Year 11 and 13 students

Interviews will continue remotely during the lockdown. Students in Year 11 and 13, in particular, should look out for their invitation to a Teams meeting via email.

Free School Meals

Vouchers will be provided for this week and next despite the complete lack of direction from DfE. I am expecting an announcement from DfE today and will keep you informed as things change.

School Transport arrangements

LCC School Transport have informed me that all normal transport arrangements will remain in place until **Friday 15 January only** to allow schools "time to work out who is attending." As we have no direct control over school transport, please contact LCC with any queries you may have in relation to this.



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Collection of books

We have had many requests to collect exercise books. We are not able to facilitate this across the school unless students are in examination years. However, we are happy to supply new exercise books which can be collected from main reception from next Monday 11 January. Please contact us at enquiries@srpa.co.uk if you wish to take up this offer.

Laptops for students in need

We have received many requests for IT support over the past few days and understandably so. I will help where it is possible but, as in the first lockdown, the pace of the DfE process from order to delivery is truly woeful. I only have a few left in stock which are for those students with an EHCP, a designated social worker or those eligible for pupil premium and/or free school meals where a machine needs to be borrowed. Feel free to approach us via enquiries@srpa.co.uk to see if we can help.

I have deliberately not mentioned summer examinations or Centre Assessed Grades in this letter as I remain poised for the DfE consultation which is now about to start on this subject. However, it absolutely beggars belief that we even need to consult at all. At SRPA, we managed the 2020 summer processes with little difficulty due to some solid planning, thorough stress testing of systems and no small amount of hard graft but the devil will always be in the detail in 2021. I look forward to the proposals for this summer, with one eye closed as I wince, in the hope that the proposal is measured, deliverable and ultimately cuts out all of the stress and pressure we all went through last year.

Either way, we won't be letting anyone down. Crisis management seems to be what we do these days...

Finally, I offer you my quote of the week from author Neil Postman which I offer up in the direction of the Secretary of State for Education:

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."

A powerful message I hope he will remember.



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I will write again soon.

Yours faithfully



Mr D Hardy
Head Teacher



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