



26 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Covid-19 including testing and plans for the vaccination of healthy 12 to 15 year olds, Inappropriate Content Online Advice for Parents, Guidance on examination contingency arrangements, Year 11 mock examinations, Year 7 and 9 residential trips, Inclusion Project Survey – institute of Physics and the Association for Science Education, Coats, parent questionnaire

Welcome to my end of week letter. A fairly packed weekly update letter this week given recent government announcements so I shall keep my introduction short:

Covid-19 including testing and plans for the vaccination of healthy 12 to 15 year olds and home testing kits

We continue to encourage twice weekly testing at home on Wednesdays and Sundays using home LFT kits. Fortunately, our cases of Covid-19 are extremely low at the moment amongst the student body.

Inappropriate Content Online Advice for Parents

Over the last 12 months we have seen an increase in the number of reports that students, while at home, have accessed content which is not always appropriate, some of which has been quite scary or upsetting. While there is no perfect way to eliminate this risk, we feel that there are things parents and carers can do to support their children online, reduce the risk or manage it after the fact. Here are some of the practical steps parents and carers can follow:

- Contact your Internet Service Provider (ISP): Companies that provide broadband such as BT, Sky and Virgin, offer free protection for parents and carers. They can filter your internet connection directly, without having to install anything. A guide on how to use this can be found here: <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/broadband-mobile/>
- YouTube is a fantastic resource, but not all the content is appropriate for children and not all YouTube channels are made for young audiences. YouTube has an app just for children – YouTube Kids – but many people don't realise that the main YouTube app has a restricted mode. Check out more about how it works here: <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/entertainment-search-engines/youtube-app/>
- Games consoles have features that can limit what games they can play based on the age ratings, and can even turn off certain features to allow gaming to be a little safer.

To learn more about these features visit <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/gaming-consoles/>

- Games are also rated based on the content, not how difficult they are. 18 rated games can have very graphic violence, adult language and themes, sexual content and horror elements. Learn a bit more about appropriate games by visiting <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/gaming-whats-appropriate-for-your-child/> or visit this site for more about game ratings <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/pegi-games-ratings-explained>

It's important to remember that no filters or controls are 100% effective so make sure your child knows that they can, and should, talk to someone if they see or hear anything upsetting online so we can offer them some reassurance. This information from Thinkuknow might be useful <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Im-worried-my-primary-aged-child-might-see-something-inappropriate-online/>

Guidance on examination contingency arrangements

The DfE and Ofqual have published their contingency arrangements for summer examinations. The key points are:

- Schools, colleges and students should assume examinations will go ahead, with the adaptations that have already been confirmed.
- However, schools and colleges should systematically collect evidence should a TAG (Teacher Assessed Grade) be needed in the future. The TAG process looks very similar to last year.
- It is suggested (not mandated) that centres do three assessments over this year: once later this term; one in the spring term; and one early in the summer term. However, assessments should, as much as possible, fit in with planned assessment points. Not all subjects need to be assessed at the same time.
- These assessments should be done under examination conditions where possible. The document suggests the following guidelines for assessments:
 - Students shouldn't know the questions beforehand / be able to guess them. This means that if all students within a school or college cannot be assessed on the same day, then different questions but a similar approach should be used.
 - They should work independently and not be assisted, unless required through access arrangements.
 - They should not have access to revision notes.
 - Assessments should be timed and supervised.
 - Assessments should replicate exam-style papers / parts of exam-style papers.
 - Students should be told in advance that each assessment may be used to inform a TAG, if examinations are cancelled.



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- The mathematics, physics and combined sciences GCSEs could use the new formulae and equation sheets in the assessment.
 - Students should only be assessed on content they have been taught.
 - Access arrangements for eligible students should be given; and a record made of this.
 - Requests for special consideration should be considered and the outcome recorded.
 - The total amount of time over the three assessments should not exceed the total examination time for that qualification.
 - Centres should use published mark schemes to mark the assessment.
 - NEA (non-examined assessment) should be completed. For art and design, completing the NEA is sufficient and no other assessment is needed.
 - After advanced information is published (on or before 7 February), centres can restrict their assessments to what will be assessed in examinations.
 - Assessments can be done in the classroom, not just in examination halls, providing the other conditions are met.
- Centres must not produce a TAG. Individual assessments can be marked and graded for formative purposes, but centres must make clear that the grade is not a TAG.
 - Centres must retain the evidence. Photocopies of the scripts may be given to students, if helpful.
 - Further guidance will be issued on how centres should reach a holistic TAG, if and when the decision to cancel examinations is made. At this stage, there is no further requirement other than collecting evidence.
 - Centres do not need to produce a centre policy at this time.

As ever, this is preliminary guidance. As our mocks begin for year 11 next week this evidence has never been more important. However, our protocols are sharp and well embedded so I am confident, if needed, that we will approach this successfully.

Year 11 mock examinations

This series of examinations begins next week for two weeks. Year 11 (and 13) have their intervention timetables in place which have been published. They also have their bespoke revision folders and texts to support their mocks. I really wish them well next week.

Year 7 and 9 residential trips

This week, you should already have received notification that we intend to run two residential trips for the above year groups at the end of the summer term. These are ideal chances for existing students to learn some new skills and engage in some valuable team building. If you wish for your child to take part in one of these opportunities we would value the reply slips



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being returned by 29 November with the deposit following on ParentPay by the end of the following week.

Inclusion Project Survey – institute of Physics and the Association for Science Education

Our school is part of an Inclusion in School project partnered with the above with a particular focus on encouraging more girls into science disciplines. As part of the project, we are aiming to gather baseline data on pupil intentions to get a better understanding of the extent to which pupils' backgrounds influence their aspirations and choice of subjects.

We would like to ask as many pupils as possible in Years 8, 9, 10, 11 to complete our online pupil intentions survey. It asks about the subjects they study, enjoy and what they may want to do after Year 11.

In order to meet the research objectives, the project also asks pupils about their background, including their gender identity, whether or not they identify as LGBTQ+, their ethnicity, whether or not they receive free school meals and whether or not they have any disability or SEN. We are aware these questions are sensitive – each question does offer a 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' option if pupils do not want to share information, but all answers are completely anonymous (no names are collected).

The unique online survey link for our school is: <http://insightful.006.alchemer.eu/s3/>.

I enclose some Q&A information about the survey and a copy of the questions for your reference so that you can see what pupils are being asked.

If you have any questions please email InclusionInSchools@ase.org.uk.

Coats

May I remind parents that students should not wear coats or hoodies in the building over or under their uniform. Please be good enough to reinforce this message at home.

Parent questionnaire

We would value your feedback now that we are approaching Christmas. If you would like to give your views, please use the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/7WH7uvxHvF>

Yesterday, it was fantastic to see the last twenty minutes of the county cup match for our new Year 7 boys' football team. It was 0-0 when I went out to take a look and finished in a 4-2 victory for our team. In addition, they behaved themselves well and played the game in the spirit intended. I was proud of all of them! Let's hope for a favourable draw in the next round...



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"This is a calm, happy and caring school."

My quote this week comes to mind whilst thinking of Year 11 and the journey they are about to go on. Like all year groups they have suffered much disruption but are more keenly affected as the first year group 'post-pandemic' to take formal external examinations. It is never too late to believe in yourself, work hard and reap the rewards so it seems appropriate to wheel out the words of the famous Australian cricketer Sir Donald Bradman who once said "If it's difficult I'll do it now, if it's impossible I'll do it presently."

Have a lovely weekend when it comes.

I will write again soon.

Yours faithfully



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