

15 January 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Thank you once again for the way you are supporting your children and us as a school in this challenging time.

The following is an update on some key areas of information but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have questions or concerns. What I think we all know is that particularly in this world of remote working and virtual contacts, communication is more important than ever. A reminder that we post key information concerning all things lockdown and coronavirus related on the banner on the front page of our website:

[Covid 19: Information for Parents](#)

Year 7 Parents' Evening

I am sorry and frustrated that the software crashed last night and sabotaged our Year 7 parents' evening. This system has worked well for us previously but the technical hitch happened across the external company's system and I know at least two other schools also had the same problem and had to cancel their Parents' Evenings. We will provisionally reschedule the evening on Tuesday 2 February, 3-6pm. Another letter to Year 7 parents/carers will follow on this, confirming and directing you to book appointments again. Please don't re-book appointments where you were able to meet with a teacher in the interval when the system was working.

Remote learning

Thank you for the feedback we've already received on this front; many comments are positive and you've also provided us with some areas to consider and develop. There is no 'one-size fits all' in terms of remote learning. We know many students value the live content and seeing their teachers. Some students report that they prefer having the work and being able to get on with learning and tasks at their own pace. We will continue to provide a mixture of approaches for all subjects and year groups and we will generally ensure that live and recorded lessons don't occupy a full 60 minutes so that students have time to complete work. Some students have found the amount of online work a bit overwhelming. Please do reassure your son/daughter not to panic or worry too much if they don't complete every lesson and every task. This is not the same as 'normal' school: technical glitches will occur and it is not easy or always possible for teachers to know how much of what they are teaching is being understood.

Many students are engaging and working well – many more than last summer – but we do still have concerns with the participation of a small but significant number of students. We will continue to chase these but we are setting up a new system which will enable you as parents/carers to see whether your child's teachers consider your son/daughter to

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be following the online learning. This will be recorded on Class Charts, which all parents/carers have access to. This will not replace the contacts already being made by tutors and subject teachers through email and other methods. Separate information on this and our remote learning will follow.

Digital Access

I am thrilled to report that an extremely generous, anonymous donor has given us and TCS Mill Lane £10,000 in order to purchase IT devices to support those without access at home. We also have some new devices from the government. This means that we do still have some laptops to lend out. The pot is of course not limitless and it is very difficult for us to be completely fair but please contact Mr Simon Kain if you would like to request to borrow a laptop: simon.kain@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

If the device your son/daughter is using at home does not have Microsoft Office, you can download this for free using the student school email address: [here](#)

If your son/daughter is having other technical issues with the online learning, please visit: <https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/it-support-information/> There are numerous help guides as well as contact information if you can't find the answer you're looking for.

Exams

Years 11 to 13 parents/carers have probably seen recent headlines about the awarding of external qualifications this summer. I'm afraid that some of the news stories and headlines, and the clarity of announcements, are not all helpful. There is a consultation taking place over the next few weeks and I hope that we will have clear direction on the way ahead regarding external assessments by this February half term, which will encompass all GCSE, A Level & Vocational/ BTEC courses.

The good news is that there will no computer-generated algorithms applied to results this year! We as teachers know your sons and daughters pretty well and will be closely involved in the awarding of results. We will support our students as much as possible whilst remaining rigorously fair. It seems, at this stage, that the grade results will be arrived at with some form of further assessments plus some evaluations by us of students' general performance which could include classwork and online work. As I said previously, the best advice I can offer for now is for students to continue to do their best, working hard in all of their subjects as we continue with the curriculum and learning at this stage.

Year 11 Examination Certificates for Summer 2020

Examination certificates are now ready for collection for students who completed Year 11 last year. Please telephone Reception to arrange a date and time – please do not attend without a prior appointment. Students should bring some form of ID with them, and if they wish a parent/guardian/friend to collect on their behalf, they must give them a letter of authorisation and that person must also provide ID and make an appointment. Visitors must follow Covid prevention measures and wear a face mask and use the hand sanitiser provided. I'm afraid that we cannot post certificates as there is no recorded delivery/signed for service available at present.

Critical Worker and Vulnerable Students

This is another area in which there have been some unhelpful headlines and mixed messages. The guidance states that you have a right to request a place for your children in school if you as a parent/carer are a critical worker, but this is caveated by the point that it is best for children to work at home if they can do so. We want to support our students as much as we can but there are challenges caused by rising numbers in school. We now have over 50 students coming into school most days, all in separate, small bubbles. As teachers are teaching and preparing online lessons, it is challenging also supervising increasing number within school. We have some staff who can't be in school some or all of the time, and we have a duty to minimise the numbers on site in order to mitigate the possibilities of virus transmission. This is a difficult balancing act for all of us. All I can ask is that you limit requests for your children to be supported on site to the minimum required, in order to ensure they continue learning successfully. Mrs Lea Carpenter continues to be the contact for booking children into school as a critical worker: lea.carpenter@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk. We do want our vulnerable students who need support to be in school where appropriate and Mrs Justine Housecroft is the contact in this respect: Justine/housecroft@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Safeguarding Support

If your child is struggling at home, please do let us know. We are just putting together a collection of external sources of advice and support which will be on our Covid 19 Information page very shortly. Please do contact one of our safeguarding and welfare leads if you need to share information or would like to request help:

Justine Housecroft: SENCO and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

justine.housecroft@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Sarah Minty-dyke: Deputy DSL and Welfare Officer:

sarah.miny-dyke@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Christine Mayne: Deputy DSL and Welfare Officer:

christine.mayne@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Rachel Harte: Welfare Officer:

rachel.harte@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Lateral Flow Testing

I'm really pleased to report that we have now run over 100 lateral flow device tests involving staff and students in school, with no positive results so far. Most people find the test a bit uncomfortable but everyone has completed it easily and without hassle. If you haven't already given your consent for your son/daughter to take the test when they are back in school, please follow the link to see the video and read about this: [here](#)

A direct link to the consent form is: [here](#)

Free School Meals

If your child is entitled to free school meals, the government have re-launched the voucher system that came into being last lockdown. This will be available from Monday 18 January and we will be in touch next week with those eligible (no need to apply). If you have queries on this front, please contact Mr Joab Forte:

joab.forte@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk

Many thanks again, and I hope that you will be able to enjoy something of a weekend.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James O'Connell".

James O'Connell
Principal