



Collaboration Excellence Opportunity



Update for Olympus Parents and Carers – 15th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

May I firstly take this opportunity to wish you a belated Happy New Year. I hope that you were able to have some kind of break during the school holiday which was like no other Christmas before it. I imagine that you were as surprised as we were when announcements about a full national lockdown came last Monday before term had even started for Olympus learners, followed soon after by news that A levels, GCSEs and SATs would not be taking place again this year. I can only apologise for any inconvenience and upset the complications have caused and hope that some kind of routine for learning is now established, whether school-based or at home for your child(ren). So much change has been announced since mid-December that Trust and school senior leaders spent a significant amount of time during their Christmas break following up on positive Covid-19 cases from the last week of term and then planning and training for the introduction of mass Covid-19 testing for students and staff in all our secondary settings from the start of this term. It is to their credit that our staff have not complained about the challenges and volume of change but have shifted their focus calmly to the new arrangements for this term. Similarly, we have been very impressed with the engagement, support and positive feedback from children, parents and carers since the lockdown arrangements started – thank you!

In-School Learning

We are currently offering in-school learning for vulnerable children, children with an EHCP and the children of critical workers (definition and guidance [here](#)) but for this last group **only if they are unable to be at home**. We have concerns about the number of children who are coming into school as numbers are rising – there is a danger that we will become sources of infection in school if too many learners are in every day. We would expect most secondary children in Year 9 and above to be able to work from home (unless they are vulnerable and have been asked to be in school). They will be doing the same work in school as their peers who are learning from home.

Remote Learning

Children who are not currently in school should be accessing the remote learning offered by their school – this will be a mixture of learning with live elements and work to be completed independently. Ofsted have produced a *What's working well in remote education* report (available [here](#)), which highlights amongst other things that live teaching is not the most important factor for successful learning, especially for long periods of time. Our staff want to get the teaching and learning right and are already being ambitious in what they are providing compared with the lockdown last spring and summer. We recognise that regular contact with teachers and adults from school is important and it will all become more refined in the coming weeks as staff and learners get used to new ways of working. If you have concerns about the remote learning that is being provided for your child(ren), please contact the school for clarification of expectations and to seek support. There is an increasing amount of research and literature available. The Ofsted report referenced above and a Department for Education blog (available [here](#)) may answer some questions. The Department for Education has set out expectations for the amount of learning (please note this is **not** live teaching time) for different age groups – broadly speaking up to 3 hours per day for KS1, 4 hours for KS2 and 5 hours for secondary. Please bear in mind that teachers may be dealing with multiple challenges if they are providing learning for children in school as well as at home, whilst possibly also having to oversee their own children engaging in remote learning at the same time – it is an intense time for all!

Access to Internet and Digital Devices

We have been able to support approximately 10% of learners with devices and/or internet access in the last few months and do not want this to be an obstacle for learning for any family within the Trust. Clearly there is a sense of urgency with home learning happening for at least the next few weeks. We have been gathering information about learners who are unable to access remote learning due



Collaboration Excellence Opportunity



to lack of device or internet access or both but realise that the situation may have changed for some families or it may only have become clear in the last week that sharing arrangements or data allowances are inadequate to participate in the remote learning being provided. We are able to request mobile data increases for families who:

- do not have fixed broadband at home;
- cannot afford additional data for their devices;
- are experiencing disruption to face-to-face education (that's everyone at the moment!)

To access this facility, please contact your child's school with the following information:

- the name of the account holder
- the number of the mobile device
- the mobile network of that device (for example Three)

You can contact school directly or use the survey (see below) to provide the information.

Feedback about Remote Learning, Access to Internet and Digital Devices

We would be really grateful for some initial feedback about the remote learning that is being provided by Olympus schools and would urge you to complete our online surveys in the next week please so that we can take your feedback on board and make improvements where we need to. It would be helpful if you could please use the survey to let us know if you still have issues in relation to internet access or are in need of a device to enable learning to take place remotely for your child(ren). The survey is anonymous but we need to know which school your responses relate to and will need you to provide your child's name if you need support with access to internet and/or devices so that we can follow up. Thank you in advance for the feedback. Please click on the relevant link below:

[Secondary Remote Learning Survey](#)

[Primary Remote Learning Survey](#)

Free School Meals

There has been a lot in the news in the last week about provision of inadequate food parcels by some schools and catering companies across the country for families eligible for income-related Free School Meals. For the record, we have been providing families with £15 per eligible child per week, paid directly into bank accounts, for each week since the start of the Christmas holidays. Payments have been authorised and processed for the first 2 weeks of this term and will already be in most bank accounts. We have started making payments for the next 2 weeks, following which we will be transferring to the Government-approved voucher scheme for the remaining weeks of lockdown. I will provide a further update in 2 weeks' time. Please contact your child's school if you have not received your payment or if you think you are now eligible and want to find out how to register.

SATs, GCSEs and A Levels

The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, announced last Wednesday that there will be no SATs, GCSE or A level exams this summer. This is clearly devastating news for many and possibly a relief to some. As yet, there is no clarity about how grades will be provided and it may be several weeks until we know. We are led to believe that schools will be consulted in the next couple of weeks but the likelihood is that teacher judgements based on evidence will be key for any grading decisions. This may include work or assessments which have not yet been completed so it is vital that learners of all ages continue to "attend" classes and work hard as everything may yet count and will doubtless be important in preparing for their next steps. I have provided links for anyone who is interested in reading the exchange of letters this week from the Secretary of State to the Head of Ofqual (available [here](#)) and the response (available [here](#)) as it gives a sense of what might lie ahead.

Year 13 students and parents will have received a letter at the end of last week (available [here](#)) about our updated Trust-wide plan for mock exams. Linked to the paragraph above, it is vital that these are taken seriously by students on the assumption that every piece of work they complete can



Collaboration Excellence Opportunity



still make a difference. The first step is the mock exams and we have adapted our planning for these to fit remote learning. Schools have been in touch with students with all the details they need and I hope they prove to be a positive experience for everyone. In case anyone missed it, we also provided a letter last week about vocational exams scheduled for January (available [here](#)).

Reinstated: Olympus Emergency Hotline

The Trust emergency hotline phone number is active: 01454 822101 and is the number to use during this period please. The Trust e-mail address is: admin@olympustrust.co.uk. The phone line and e-mail account are being monitored weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Please note that this is for emergencies only or if you need to contact the Trust. However, all Olympus schools are open and the usual communication channels remain open to you to contact them. If you do need to make contact, please remember that the schools are under increased pressure with staff absence and trying to run home-based and in-school provision simultaneously. School contact details are available on each school's website.

Lateral Flow Testing – Secondary Settings

Staff and students in all Olympus secondary settings are being offered testing for Covid-19 using Lateral Flow Devices. Up to a third of individuals who test positive for Covid-19 have no symptoms at all and can, therefore, spread the virus unknowingly. That is why the testing of those without symptoms is vital. All members of staff and students who are in school at the moment are being offered weekly tests.

The Government's plan is for staff and secondary students who come into contact with a positive case to be tested on a daily basis as an alternative to self-isolation (as long as their test results are negative). This will allow them to remain in school if they agree to be tested for 7 consecutive days following last contact with a positive case. The tests are safe, straightforward to administer and provide results within 30 minutes. This will enable schools to stay open and will mean that staff and students will not have to self-isolate as they did in the autumn after contact with a positive case.

Testing will be carried out by school staff who have undergone the required training, although students will perform the swabbing process themselves. If you have any questions about lateral flow testing, further information can be found [here](#).

Annual Accounts

The Trust's Annual General Meeting took place on Tuesday this week, unusually but perhaps inevitably, via a Zoom meeting. The Trust's Accounts for 2019-20 have been audited, approved and submitted to the regulator. They have been uploaded to the Olympus website and are available [here](#) if you are wish to look at them. The Trust's overall financial position at the end of 2019-20 was positive and improved compared with 2018-19.

Online Safety for parent's webinar: "It is never going to happen to my child..."

In response to Covid-19 lockdown, Avon and Somerset Constabulary is offering a **free** parent webinar about online safety. This seems very timely. It will cover the following content:

- Overview of online risks
- Exploitation of children online
- Technical protective and safety measures available
- Top tips on starting a conversation with your child about the internet and how to work together to use the internet safely

It takes place on **Monday 8th February 2020 from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.** To book, please click [here](#).

Term Dates and INSET Days for Terms 3 and 4

Thursday, 11 th February	Term 3 ends for learners
Friday, 12 th February	Staff training day – no school for learners
Monday, 22 nd February	Term 4 starts
Thursday, 1 st April	Term 4 ends



Collaboration Excellence Opportunity



Guidance Links

The latest guidance for parents and carers from the Department for Education can be found [here](#).

The latest NHS guidance can be found [here](#).

Information on how to get tested can be found [here](#).

National Lockdown: Stay at Home guidance can be found [here](#).

Thank you for your engagement and support. Please stay safe.

With very best wishes,

Dave Baker
Chief Executive Officer
The Olympus Academy Trust

@MrDaveBaker @olympustrust

www.olympustrust.co.uk

admin@olympustrust.co.uk