

27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear parents/carers,

## Re: School lockdown update

I do hope this email finds your family is well. These unprecedented times have been difficult in one way or another for all of us due to the terrible disease Covid-19 is. My sincere condolences go to those families that have lost loved ones over recent weeks and our loving thoughts go out to each of you.

I would usually write at the beginning of a new school term with celebrations from the previous term, however, with the likelihood of a further extension to the lockdown period I wanted to inform you of what we have been doing at Phoenix during this time and share some useful information.

Before Easter, our students who are entitled to free school meals were able to obtain a lunch either at school or via West Bromwich food bank. I wanted to thank Keith Turner and his team again for extending their opening hours to provide this service. As Easter approached, we took the decision to issue two sets of vouchers to parents/carers of FSM children so they could buy food to support their children whilst reducing unnecessary travel and adhering to social distancing. The school is now using the government's voucher scheme Edenred to facilitate ongoing support. The vouchers have been ordered via this scheme but unfortunately there will be a delay in receiving your next voucher as they are experiencing high volume orders at present. We expect that these will be sent to you in the next few days. If you are entitled to free school meals, and receive your next voucher (week commencing 20.04.20) in the post, please send your email address with the name of your child(ren) to [info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk](mailto:info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk) to receive your next voucher instantly by email. Emailed vouchers are also valid at other shops such as Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Asda and many more, unlike posted vouchers which are only usable at Tesco. Also, if your circumstances have changed and you feel that your child now meets the criteria for free school meals, please contact Sandwell Council for assistance.

As a school, we have been working hard to ensure that your children get quality school work to complete whilst they are at home. I can understand how testing it is juggling between managing being at home (including working from home for some of you) and home schooling your children as I have been struggling myself, trying to work at home whilst looking after my 19 month old boy and my 11 year old son.

It is also well worth a look at educational resources on line. For example, the Bitesize podcast is designed specifically to support parents. As a school we are promoting the Oak National Academy which has a wealth of learning support.

We are looking to hear how our strategy is working for you and your children at home and would appreciate it if you could take 5 minutes to complete this simple questionnaire by accessing it online via <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/studentshomelearningapril2020>

For those students who were expecting to sit their examinations next month and the frustrations that these cancellations have caused a large number of them, please note that we are currently working with all Year 11 teachers to provide the examination boards with all the information that the government has requested. Students are expected to receive their results in August as originally planned.

Mrs Lynn Edge, our Connexions personal adviser, is available to help you with any queries or concerns regarding next steps and educational pathways. She can be contacted by phone on 0779 271 1064 (Monday – Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm) or by email at [lynn.edge@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk](mailto:lynn.edge@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk)

However, my concern now is with a significant number of Year 10 and 12 students who have not engaged with home learning and are not working hard during their time at home. This will ultimately impact them next summer, so my request is to their parents/carers, please ensure that your child is completing the work set as laid out in the earlier message this week from Mr Derbyshire. Any student who fails to complete these tasks will be required to attend compulsory additional lessons from 3.00pm to 4.00pm on our return to school.

Congratulations go to those who have been working hard at home during the lockdown and to all parents/carers who are doing so well in challenging circumstances.

It is vitally important that we all manage our emotional health at this time; there are a number of support links on our website in addition to the support available from staff here – do stay in touch with your pastoral staff.

Equally, the importance of monitoring your child's use of the internet is more than ever a priority: please refer to our area of online safety under 'Parents and Carers' on the website.

Following the announcement from the Education secretary regarding supporting vulnerable students with laptops, we currently are still awaiting the details of how these are determined and how they will be distributed. Once we know, we will contact those eligible families.

We have supported key workers and the NHS by remaining open to their children, this included the whole Easter holidays as well as Good Friday and Easter Monday and my thanks must go to our incredible team of staff here at Phoenix who are doing a fabulous job during these tough times and continue to be flexible to the needs of our community.

We have also shared all our PPE from our science and technology departments a couple of weeks ago, to support the lack of PPE in local hospitals.

I will write to you again soon, once I have further information to share with you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,



Mike Smith  
Head teacher