



Dear Varndean families

Coronavirus update 1st May

Remote learning

It is hardly credible that it is more than six weeks since your children last attended school. The world is very different to the one we knew at the start of March and still feels far from normal. I am missing the routines and rhythm of school life and the energy and company of colleagues and students and many of you have told us your children are feeling the same.

The speculation about schools reopening continues but there are many more questions than answers about how this might happen. I suspect that reopening is still some way away and headteachers nationally are pressing for the time necessary to plan any reopening properly and so ensure the safety of all concerned.

So lockdown continues and this will draw heavily on our reserves of determination and resilience in so many aspects of our lives. The children have already had to rely on these qualities and their resolve has been incredible: we have had lots of amazing work shared with us. This said, I know how hard many of them have found these last 6 weeks and they will be disappointed to know that more is needed. With this in mind, a focus for us next week will be wellbeing and happiness and the newsletter will provide further tips for students. We would welcome their feedback on these in this week's survey.

Next Friday is VE day (and a bank holiday) and as we remember a previous time of great national unity. My message is that it is partnership and working together that helps us get through difficult times. This has been evident in school this week where there have been numerous examples of children working with their teachers to resolve problems, children sharing their concerns with school bases and families agreeing adjustments to learning expectations with their child's deputy head of school.

Remote learning is difficult and frustrating at times and I know that it can be a cause of tension and stress. If your child is in this situation then communication, either with an individual teacher, form tutor or a school base, can overcome many of these obstacles. Do please get in touch so that we can work together to find a solution and enable some learning to continue while maintaining positive wellbeing.



Enrichment 2020

This week we have been looking carefully at the viability of this year's enrichment programme. Even if schools are fully open in July it is not clear what restrictions will be in place and it is hard to imagine that all limits on travel and the requirements to socially distance would have been lifted. This would significantly undermine the activities on offer. Furthermore, the financial uncertainty facing many families at the moment means that now is not the time to be asking for further payments for trips that we cannot be certain can go ahead.

Therefore, in consultation with the governors of the school, I have decided ***to cancel enrichment for this year***. A full refund of any deposits made will be paid to families in the next few weeks. I know this will be disappointing news for students who will have been looking forward to a week that is one of the highlights of the year, but I do hope you can understand the reasons for this decision. In constructing next year's offer we will work hard to make sure that the full range of activities is available to all year groups (including the future year 10 group) and that the choices made for this year can be honoured where possible.

Free school meal vouchers

There have been considerable problems nationally with the voucher scheme for families entitled to a free school meal for their child. If you are in this situation and have struggled to access the vouchers or redeem them in the supermarket, then do please let Andy Roberts know as soon as possible so we can try to resolve this for you: andyroberts@varndean.co.uk

Year 11

As a school we continue to hold our year 11 students in our thoughts and recognise the range of emotions they are experiencing as their time at school has come to an abrupt and premature end. I know many are making good use of their time working on the digital badge scheme explained in last week's video assembly and I urge them to keep this up.

Secondary headteachers across Brighton have been talking to colleges and sixth forms about how to best support year 11 students and have written to all students. A copy of this letter can be found [here](#). At the same time teachers have been busy this week beginning to estimate grades for year 11 students now that examinations have been cancelled. Please can I remind you that teachers **cannot** reveal the grades they are predicting.

Please don't forget you can find all of our previous correspondence on our website [here](#).



Finally I wanted to add how impressed I am by the way that families are adapting to the challenges of lockdown. I know what a struggle it can be juggling home life and your own work while having the additional burden of your children's education added in and I wanted to thank you for all that you have done so far and your ongoing support of the school at this time.

Kind regards

Gareth Hughes
Acting Headteacher

Safeguarding and school base contacts

Angelou

Sam Whiteman - samwhiteman@varndean.co.uk
Fiona Hall - fionahall@varndean.co.uk
Lorina Ventura - lorinaventura@varndean.co.uk

Russell

Abi Holder - abigailholder@varndean.co.uk
Charlotte Drake - charlottedrake@varndean.co.uk

Turing

Georgina Maltby - georginamaltby@varndean.co.uk
Donna Mills - donnamills@varndean.co.uk
Rachel Christy - rachelchristy@varndean.co.uk

Ellis

Sandra Knights - sandraknights@varndean.co.uk
Caroline Ball - carolineball@varndean.co.uk
Donna Mills - donnamills@varndean.co.uk

Our safeguarding team will be contactable **during school hours** if you would like advice on an issue or wish to report a concern.

safeguarding@varndean.co.uk

Vicky Anstiss (Designated Safeguarding Lead) - 07984 221254

Kerry Tester - (Safeguarding Officer) - 07572 707214

To access safeguarding advice (outside school hours) please contact Front Door for Families
Phone: 01273 290400 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm on Fridays
Out-of-hours: 01273 335905 (Emergency Duty Service)