



Dear Varndean families

Coronavirus update 7th May

Remote learning

This message comes a day earlier than usual as it is the VE day bank holiday tomorrow and school will be fully closed. I hope you and your families manage a restful and healthy long weekend.

Thank you to those parents who have encouraged their children (or done so on their behalf) to contact teachers, tutors and school bases this week in response to my message about partnership and communication in last Friday's update. I reiterate that we do not want children feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed by remote learning and my video message in this week's assemblies tries to reinforce this point and provide a few brief reminders of steps that can be taken to work through these difficulties. Please point your children to this clip if they haven't already seen it.

As lockdown continues it is unsurprising to find that levels of frustration and stress are on the increase and this week's newsletter also contains some vital wellbeing information and further resources to help create positive diversions for students. We have also described how we are increasing our pastoral support - creating greater accessibility to families and additionally the assemblies try to provide plenty of positive reinforcement for what the students are achieving. You can link to the newsletter [here](#).

One of these ideas that is proving popular is the digital badges programme that Mrs Baker has been pioneering across the City. The programme provides opportunities for students to be recognised for the extra that they do and the projects that they complete and creates an easy to follow structure for them to follow. Initially it was aimed at year 11 and has now caught hold in other year groups too - please see the links in the newsletter if you would like to know more.

Increasingly students are sharing their successes with us; please encourage them to keep doing so. We love to see the school work but also examples of the range of amazing projects they have taken on. Many of these are showcased in the assemblies and are testament to the creativity and resourcefulness of our students. Thank you to you all for the support you have given to bring these ideas to completion.

As I type we are awaiting further guidance from the Government about their plans for reopening schools and in this vacuum the speculation continues. The more I think about this task the



more complex it seems and so my view that reopening is some way off hasn't changed. I hope to be able to say more about this next week in response to the national announcement.

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

Building expansion

You may remember that the LA applied for planning permission earlier this year to develop the school site to ensure that we have the space needed to accommodate the extra students who are joining the school. Happily I can confirm that the permission has been granted and the extensions (all internal) can go ahead. While the Covid virus didn't interrupt the permissions process it will impact on the timeline and with procurement and appointment of a contractor delayed until the Autumn building is unlikely to start before Jan 21, I will update you on the implications of this in the new academic year as the plans for how this will be managed develop. You can see a link to the original proposals for the extension [here](#).

PPE Equipment

Discussion about the availability of PPE equipment continues to dominate the news and I am pleased to report that this week the school used its 3D printer to make 80 face shields. We have linked up with the Brighton mutual aid organisation and hope that these might be able to be used in care homes locally. Thank you to Mr Davies and Ms Pennant for their work on this project and there are some photos on the department twitter feed <https://twitter.com/VarndeanDT>.

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

Tomorrow is VE day and while we can't celebrate as our predecessors did 75 years ago I do hope you and your family will be able to make the most of the long weekend.

Kind regards

Gareth Hughes
Acting Headteacher



Safeguarding and school base contacts

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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)