



Dear Varndean families

### ***Coronavirus update 5th January 2021***

Well here we go again! Having worked so hard to reopen our school and worked in partnership with you to make school both safe and successful through the Autumn term we are faced with a further period of enforced closure. The latest data on infection rates does not lead us to question this decision but the news comes with some sadness and the corridors and classrooms of Varndean are quieter today than we would like.

We approach this lockdown from a position of strength having learned many lessons from last year's closure and developed a model of off-site learning that is both familiar and effective. This letter aims to briefly update you on the approach we will be taking at Varndean between now and February half term and to remind you of the support that is available for you and your child / children. As we did last year we will continue to communicate with you regularly during the closure period to remind you of key information and let you know how our offer is developing.

I would like to emphasise that we believe that the success of off-site learning is in the partnership between home and school. We recognise that school closure puts a huge strain on families at a time when many aspects of life are already more challenging than usual and our approach is one that aims to enable learning to continue, children's well being to be supported while not making unrealistic demands on families.

#### ***Off-site learning***

As outlined in the off-site learning documents we have already shared with you this term ([4th January - 15th January 2021 Y7-11 2021 Remote Learning](#)) our approach is a blend of teacher led webinars and learning activities set via the google classroom and monitored by your child's teachers. These plans will remain in place until the 15th January before being refreshed at that point. As January progresses we will be looking to introduce more tutor time interactions, learning for life experiences and more of the tutorial type interventions that enable students to stay engaged and on top of their work as closure extends beyond the initial two week period.

As before we urge students to be active rather than passive participants in the process. Asking questions of their teachers via the google classroom or the webinars that they watch, acting on the feedback they receive and connecting regularly with their form tutor.

We are eager to develop and maintain high levels of engagement in the work and to this end form tutors and school bases will monitor participation and we will report to you fortnightly about your child's participation levels. These reports will be on Varndean Plus and the first one will be early during the week beginning 18th January.



We are also planning a series of parental webinars in the next two weeks to explain to you what we have learned about the best ways to support your child whilst they are at home learning and to respond to your questions about how off-site learning can be most effective.

### ***Year 11 students***

Many of you will share our sympathy for year 11 students who face increased anxiety today with the news that not all examinations will proceed in the summer as normal and that alternative arrangements will be made. As these students face uncertainty we are urging them to take a “business as usual” approach. The more learning they do during closure, the better they will be prepared for whatever OfQUAL and the DfE come up with. We have written to all year 11 families today to reiterate this message and offer our continued support.

### ***ICT devices***

Successful off-site learning does require regular access to a working device that connects to the internet. The DfE have distributed some devices and we have loaned many from the school’s supply. School base teams have been contacting families where we believe access may have been an issue and our belief is that we have met all the needs that have been identified. If access to a device is still a problem for your child then please contact their school base in the first instance to discuss the matter further.

### ***Provision for the children of critical workers and students who are otherwise vulnerable.***

Thank you for your quick responses to our communications today and yesterday to assess the need to access this onsite provision. As a result of your feedback we have established a comprehensive programme that meets the needs of students and families. If you feel that your child may be eligible and you haven’t yet contacted us please email your child’s school base to discuss availability.

### ***Free School Meals.***

We will continue to support families whose child / children are eligible for Free School Meals which they aren’t accessing due to closure. Vouchers redeemable in most supermarkets can be provided. If you are struggling to access the voucher or believe you have not received what you are entitled to then please contact [lynnhill@varndean.co.uk](mailto:lynnhill@varndean.co.uk) to discuss further.

### ***School base support and safeguarding***

Our school base teams and safeguarding colleagues will continue to operate during closure to support students and families. School bases will prioritise contacts with students who they know may be struggling during closure or who may need signposting to further well being support. If you think your child needs to be added to their list of contact then please do make contact with the appropriate team.



In addition teams will monitor engagement and contact you or your child if they are not engaging in off-site learning.

School base teams remain your point of contact should you have questions or queries about your child's well being or progress and their contact details are at the end of each of these updates. If you are unable to contact staff in the usual way by telephone, please contact them using the emails at the bottom of this letter and staff will get back to as soon as possible.

The safeguarding team also remains operational and they can be contacted during school hours in the ways listed at the bottom of this update. Please don't hesitate to contact them if you are worried about a child.

***COVID restrictions in the community***

A further period of lockdown with additional restrictions will challenge us all. But in the context of the new strain of COVID and its increased transmissibility please can I ask you to remind your children of the importance of following the rules at all times. Put simply the more compliance there is the fewer cases there will be and therefore the sooner we will be able to open the school again.

***And finally***

Closing the school is a difficult decision to take but this time we do so knowing how off-site learning works and how to make it successful. A key part of this is establishing good habits from the start for all of our students. Following the timetable, sticking to a routine, keeping fit and active, and keeping in contact with friends, family and teachers can all play their part and it is our partnership that will make this more likely to happen.

My staff are looking forward to working with you to make sure that the next six weeks are as successful as possible and enable your child to continue to develop.

Kind regards

William Deighan  
Headteacher



## **Safeguarding and school base contacts**

### **Lennox**

Shelley Baker - [shelleybaker@varndean.co.uk](mailto:shelleybaker@varndean.co.uk)

Emma Sutton - [emmasutton@varndean.co.uk](mailto:emmasutton@varndean.co.uk)

### **Angelou**

Sam Whiteman - [samwhiteman@varndean.co.uk](mailto:samwhiteman@varndean.co.uk)

Fiona Hall - [fionahall@varndean.co.uk](mailto:fionahall@varndean.co.uk)

Lorina Ventura - [lorinaventura@varndean.co.uk](mailto:lorinaventura@varndean.co.uk)

### **Russell**

Abi Holder - [abigailholder@varndean.co.uk](mailto:abigailholder@varndean.co.uk)

Maria Rose - [mariarose@varndean.co.uk](mailto:mariarose@varndean.co.uk)

### **Turing**

Georgina Maltby - [georginamaltby@varndean.co.uk](mailto:georginamaltby@varndean.co.uk)

Donna Mills - [donnamills@varndean.co.uk](mailto:donnamills@varndean.co.uk)

Rachel Christy - [rachelchristy@varndean.co.uk](mailto:rachelchristy@varndean.co.uk)

### **Ellis**

Sandra Knights - [sandraknights@varndean.co.uk](mailto:sandraknights@varndean.co.uk)

Caroline Ball - [carolineball@varndean.co.uk](mailto:carolineball@varndean.co.uk)

Donna Mills - [donnamills@varndean.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:safeguarding@varndean.co.uk)

Vicky Anstiss (Designated Safeguarding Lead) - [vickyanstiss@varndean.co.uk](mailto:vickyanstiss@varndean.co.uk)

Kerry Tester - (Safeguarding Officer) - [kerrytester@varndean.co.uk](mailto:kerrytester@varndean.co.uk)

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)