

Weekly News Update Friday 18 September

On behalf of all the staff at Dorothy Stringer we would like to thank all our parents and carers for their support with the return to school for all of our students. It has been wonderful to see so many students ready to learn and making the most of the opportunities we have on offer to them at Dorothy Stringer. Students across all year groups have made a strong start to the academic year, displaying a renewed and positive attitude to learning.

There may be many challenges over the coming year, however I would like to reassure you that all the staff here are committed to ensuring that each child is given every possible opportunity to succeed and make progress in their learning.

I would therefore like to outline the provision we have put in place for students should we have a local lockdown or, as is happening at present, where we have people isolating. This may be due to quarantine after returning from abroad, or where track and trace has made contact and asked for people to isolate at home and take a test, or where they live with someone who potentially has symptoms.

Meet the Tutor Evenings

In order to touch base with parents/carers there is an opportunity to meet your son/daughter's form tutor (virtually via video) and discuss the way they have settled back into school, any concerns you or your children may have and set some targets for the academic year ahead. Parents and carers will have received a separate email explaining how to book appointments.

The individual subject meetings take place starting with Year 10 on 19 November and then on 28 January 2021 for Year 9. Currently these too are scheduled to take place using the new virtual system.

Our Year 7 Pastoral Team are looking forward to meeting our Year 7 parents and carers at our Virtual Meet and Greet evening on Monday 21 September.

Open Evening

Owing to the current restrictions on external visitors coming into school we will also be holding our Open Evening virtually this year. Our Open Evening event will take place from 5pm on Thursday 1 October. As we are having a virtual Open Evening it will **not** be necessary to close early or start at a later time the following day, so therefore we will stick to our current staggered timetable. You can visit the virtual event by visiting our website on the night.

Year 10

It's lovely to see how well Year 10s have settled well into their new GCSE options and many are talking enthusiastically about their lessons. However, if any think they may have made a mistake in their option choices, they must see Mrs Cumming by the end of the month. After the end of September, no changes to options will be possible.

Weather

The forecast for the latter part of next week looks variable and therefore it is important students have a waterproof coat (not a hoodie). As the weather becomes cooler, we will continue to keep windows and doors open in classrooms to allow for air to circulate freely.

We would ask that students have a school jumper to keep warm and then as temperatures drop we will allow them to wear coats in classrooms.

Planning for Learning during Lockdown

In order to allow for students to continue learning in the event of local lockdown or if they have to self-isolate owing to coronavirus we have significantly upgraded our IT systems.

Students in Years 7-9 are learning some aspects of Microsoft teams in their computing lessons. Students can all access Teams via the Office 365 link on the SLG and are being shown this in lessons.

All students are also able to download up to five copies of Office 365 onto their personal devices be they PCs or laptops. In addition, should they want to download Teams onto a mobile phone or tablet, they can use the links below to the apple store and google play store. It is free and will be the main way we deliver content if we have to lockdown in the future.

Teams download to devices

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.microsoft.teams&hl=en_GB (Google Play store)

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/microsoft-teams/id1113153706> (Apple)

Help pages on SLG https://gateway.dorothy-stringer.co.uk/DSHS/student/Pages/Help_Teams.aspx

In the event of a lockdown work will be provided in a number of ways. Home Learning and some resources will continue to be posted on the SLG and staff will email class details when needed. Staff have setup all classes on Teams and your son/daughter should be able to see these if they download the Teams app (see above). Staff will then be able to deliver live lessons for 45 minutes following a timetable. This will allow for lesson changeover and the inevitable ICT glitches that many of us experienced with broadband capacity.

If your son/daughter is isolating at home you must contact the attendance office and we will liaise with teachers accordingly. Staff will contact home to provide tasks and resources for students to continue to learn.

Covid-19 Advice and Information

If you child is displaying potential symptoms of COVID, you should keep them at home and book a test for them as soon as possible. We are aware this is not easy, but it is important that students with symptoms have a negative test result before returning to school.

If someone in your household has potential symptoms of COVID but your child is physically well, the ill person should arrange for a test as soon as possible and the household should isolate for 14 days. Please notify attendance at school that your child is isolating. Work will be provided for them to do either via a live Teams lesson, or by providing resources. Subject staff may use Teams to show the whiteboard in their classroom and the lesson which is being undertaken each day. We are also making use of subject material which links directly with the courses they are studying through Oak National Academy or Seneca Learning. Students are able to be back in the classroom as soon as tests come back with a negative outcome, or the required isolation time has elapsed.

If your child becomes unwell in school we will assess them and contact you as normal. Where they show symptoms which could be considered to be those of COVID we will advise you to book a test as soon as possible. If the symptoms continue (or get worse) then they should remain at home until either there is a negative test result or they are well again. We do understand that sending home students causes disruption for you and your children, but it is part of the efforts that we are taking to ensure everyone is able to safely come into school.

Testing

Unfortunately, we have not been provided with home testing kits for students. Anyone who requires a test has to logon to the portal <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

The site is extremely busy and, no doubt, you will have read the information about the ability of the system to cope with the amount of testing required. Our local testing sites do require you to be referred and you cannot just turn up. Hopefully, capacity will improve, however, please do not call the school for referrals or kits as we are unable to help with this.

Please check our website for more information: https://public.dorothy-stringer.co.uk/ds/Pages/covid-19_information.aspx

Word of the Week: Impeccable (adj) = something that is perfect and has no faults

Wishing all our families a restful weekend.

Take care and stay safe.

Matt Hillier
Headteacher