



The Matthew Arnold School

Part of the Bourne Education Trust



12th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Spring half-term break: 15th - 19th February 2021

We come to another break and are still in lockdown. While I know that we all expected it, it is nevertheless hard to feel the same anticipation when in fact things are going to be much the same but without a structure to keep children organised! However, there is a definite sense of light at the end of the tunnel. The vaccine rollout appears to be on track, and I am putting up with the usual sly digs from colleagues asking me why I haven't had mine yet, given my age!

What is vital to remember is that lockdown or not, we all need a break from routine. For me this is going to be making sure I spend more time outdoors, whatever the weather. I am beginning to look distinctly grey on camera! As always, we have put together a wellbeing programme for the week, which we hope as many of you as possible will get involved with. This has been put together by the inexhaustible Mr Lawrence - to his credit, he does practise what he preaches and is fit, healthy and (usually) very cheerful. Daily posts will be found on the [wellbeing](#) section of the Spring 21 tab of the school website from Monday - Friday.

After the break, we will be adjusting our focus to take into account feedback from you, your children, the staff and governors, other schools in the Trust and nationally. There is no doubt that the amount of time many children are spending in front of a screen is a cause for concern, one which I admit I didn't think through enough when planning this lockdown provision. I am not making radical changes, but enough to keep a daily reminder there about the need to switch the screen off.

I would also like to address the thorny issue of children's progress. Whilst we are delighted with student engagement in online learning overall, we know that it is impossible to offer the equality of provision that we aspire to in school (and even then it is challenging). I know some of you are worried because your child seems demotivated. Others find that their children prefer the quieter atmosphere and are in any case more independent. Nearly all of you would say that the lack of immediate teacher feedback that we can provide in a classroom is a big loss. You are more likely to feel panic about the future if your child is in year 11 or 10. How will they make up for lost time and get the grades they deserve?

None of these questions can be properly answered, so I am asking you to be brave and honest and to ask yourself what is truly important here. All children across the world have lost learning time - some far more than others and with far more potential for long-term harm. Everyone has had to make tough compromises and is continuing to do so. Children in Y11 will get the grades they deserve because we who know them best will make sure this happens. We will look at what children in all years need to focus on as and when life begins to return to normal. But we are not going to make up this lost time. We can't. What we can do is celebrate any positives which have come out of lockdown, and remember that all experiences are part of

lifelong learning. If your child has learnt how to cook a meal for the family, or can now be trusted to go shopping, or has helped wash the car - these are all to be valued. We will be assessing students' progress this coming half term, but we are determined that this does not lead to further angst and stress for all concerned.

The main adjustments to the provision in Spring 2 are as follows:

- A formalisation of expectations for work done outside school day hours - a minimum in years 7-10, and a formal timetable for Y11 students
- The introduction of a SuperCurriculum that students can access to stretch and challenge themselves if they want to
- An assessment week for each year group
- Combining tutor groups so that tutors can take it in turns to lead sessions or use the time to contact individual parents and students
- The introduction of a reading for enjoyment hour for all year groups
- The introduction of a 'Why don't you ...?' hour for all year groups
- The reduction of one lesson per subject per fortnight for year 11 students so that they can join in the above and keep on top of assignments
- An increased focus on wellbeing and work life balance for all
- Additional support for those undergoing emotional and mental stress.

All the above will be explained and sent to you in good time over the half-term holiday week. Please keep an eye on your inbox, the school website and your social media alerts.

Your children may have had a sudden rush of invites and cancellations on Teams, as we make sure students realise they are NOT in lessons next week, and to reflect some of the changes mentioned above.

I will be opening a new parent feedback form at the end of the first week back (26th February) but in the meantime please do use the [current form](#) or contact me or any member of staff by email.

In the meantime, my love and best wishes to you and your families. I hope you stay safe and well. I look forward to 'seeing' my students on Monday 22nd February. By this time I hope to have heard from Boris Johnson and the Department for Education regarding their plans for schools over the next few weeks.

Kind regards



Mary Gould
Headteacher