

The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School

Known Nurtured Inspired

Headteacher: Ian Wilson BA PGCE MA NPQH



12th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would like to update you on developments at school. Schools remain firmly in the news and some basic points are being widely understood in society – at 2 metres social distance, fewer students and adults will be able to work in one space, breaks and lunches must be staggered, and all spaces need careful cleaning after use and in preparation for the next user. Whatever the vagaries of the public debate, all at Bishops' are making plans to keep staff and students safe and taking decisions based on the best evidence we have. This week we have welcomed back all our staff into our school. It has been uplifting to see colleagues again as we approach a safe return to working onsite and develop our Home Learning.

This week each member of staff is involved in training, learning spaces are being prepared and the risk assessments agreed by governors such as signage/floor markings/sanitiser dispensers are being installed.

From **Monday June 15th** we plan to invite and welcome a Year 12 form to their allocated weekly day.

From **Monday June 22nd** a Year 10 form group will be welcomed to their allocated weekly day.

Electronic home learning will **continue for all** year groups.

Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are working electronically for this term. Our Learning from Home timetable is published on our website and teachers will continue to set and support learning via Show My Homework. The Covid-19 banner on our website links through to Learning from Home resources and attendance information. There are also email contact details if you have concerns about the welfare or safety of a child, and support links for online safety and wellbeing.

It can be all too easy to get caught up in the debates which a crisis inevitably generates. Objectively, the government scientific adviser Professor Whitty, speaking on Wednesday gave the following assurances:

1. The R-rate remains just below 1 in England
2. The incidence (number of new cases) is low but not very low at 1 in one thousand
3. The epidemic is shrinking but not fast

Professor Whitty concluded by saying that the numbers are coming down, which gives me confidence in our phased and careful plans.

As a parent of a year 7 daughter, I certainly appreciate the juggling and the support you provide for all the learning that has been completed at home. As our Learning from Home situation continues, questions naturally arise. Zoom / Teams Live lessons have begun to be fashionable and I would like to share the following reasons behind our decision not to use this approach for students in Years 7 - 9. Equity - not all students will have access to a computer and or suitable broadband at a time when a 'live' lesson would take place. There is the challenge of 30 students being logged on at the same time and making best use of the time for learning rather than IT issues. Research – there is insufficient research to show any advantage of this approach, whereas retrieval, assessments and feedback loops are proved to develop learning. A blend of different video, quiz, PowerPoint, and text approaches give variety.

We do however realise the importance of teacher: student relationships in learning to enhance progress and much of this week's training has provided staff with the expertise to include more opportunities for 'teacher voice' in the Learning from Home activities. This has included:

- How to add narration to PowerPoints (so that the teachers can talk through some of the learning materials being set as they work through PowerPoints).
- How to use voice messages on Show My Homework – so that students can listen to the guidance from their teacher as they talk through expectations for tasks.
- How to ensure feedback and use of rewards are utilised to motivate students' approach.

- How to use consolidation tools such as quizzes to ensure that learning is embedded and connections to past and future learning opportunities are secured.
- How to ensure different tasks and 'stretch and challenge' in tasks support students that may need more guidance and to provide additional work for those completing tasks at a faster pace.

I am confident that over the coming weeks, you will see more 'teacher voice' in the Learning from Home tasks and that students are confident about approaching their tasks, how they can access additional learning resources and how they can ask teachers for help and support.

The advantage of our approach through Show my Homework allows students to revisit materials at their own pace as well as working on the three subjects on their timetabled days. Our expectations for Learning from Home remain the same:

- 1) Students should be in a daily routine for the Learning from Home <https://bishopschester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Learning-from-Home-expectations-for-students-wc-20-04-20.pdf>
- 2) Students should log on to Show My Homework every school day and see three Learning from Home tasks in line with the published timetabled (which is updated every ten days). Students decide the order of the tasks they will work on throughout the day. <https://bishopschester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Learning-from-Home-Timetable-08-06-20-19-06-20-cycle-6.pdf>
- 3) Students should spend *at least* an hour working through the learning activities and resources for each of the 3 subjects. If a quiz is set to consolidate learning, it is important that students have worked through the resources relating to the quiz *before* starting the quiz. Students should use all three attempts to try to improve their score.
- 4) Students can attempt extension exercises in addition to the Learning from Home tasks set and can message their teacher should they require any additional work or resources. <https://bishopschester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/online-resources-and-links.pdf>
- 5) Parents and Carers can log into the Show my Homework app and control the notifications they receive – for example when a student has submitted a piece of work. <https://help.teamsatchel.com/en/collections/1695420-parents>

As I welcomed returning staff this week, I highlight one of the most beautiful and yet challenging verses in the Old Testament, from the prophet Isaiah – 'Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.' (Isaiah 43.19) – the metaphors and imagery are so powerful, particularly when we are facing challenges like this.

The national situation gives a picture of a very complicated time for schools, which I am sure will be true for all walks of life and every household. Bishops' continues to remain objective in exercising judgement for the good of young people, our staff, and communities.

With best wishes,

Ian Wilson
Headteacher