

7th January 2021

Philip Storey BSc (Hons), NPQH, PQSI
CEO

University of Kent Academies Trust
Marlborough Road
Gillingham
Kent
ME7 5HT

T: 01634 852341
E: office@universityofkentacadmiestrust.org.uk
W: www.universityofkentacadmiestrust.org.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is the beginning of 2021 and I would have hoped to be writing to you about our plans for the academies and opportunities for students. Please be assured that while we continue to be working hard on these areas, my current priority for communication with you is our response to the COVID pandemic. My aim is that you are as informed as possible.

Following the government's announcement on Monday 4th January regarding school site closures for the vast majority of young people, temporarily the focus has shifted away from the offer of mass COVID testing in schools for all students and staff towards ensuring effective remote learning. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on this COVID testing and remote learning, as well as giving you some brief commentary on Free School Meals vouchers, GCSEs, BTECs and A Levels.

COVID Testing

If your child is still attending either of the academy sites, then I hope that you will be reassured that from Monday 11th January, Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing, which will identify whether or not a student has COVID, will be offered to students every 3-5 days. Students should know the outcome of the LFD test within an hour.

Any individual found to be positive will be sent home, instructed to self-isolate and given a confirmatory Polymerise Chain Reaction (PCR) test kit, with instructions. This is to check the LFD test result. Your child must remain at home until the result from the PCR test is known.

If the positive LFD test is confirmed by the PCR test, then it will be necessary for that student to continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the original LFD test. If the PCR test turns out to be negative, please contact your academy.

Any other students who have come into close contact with another individual who has tested positive, will be tested daily for seven days.

Staff on site are also being offered regular testing.

Remote Learning

Bearing in mind that the current lockdown is likely to last until late February, it is essential that students are fully engaged in remote learning and this will be carefully monitored by teachers. Too much learning time has already been lost in the previous lockdown and I know you will agree that our young people need to use the next six weeks as productively as possible. I am sure that if

parents, carers, teachers, and pastoral staff provide consistent encouragement and support, this will have a positive effect on students' education and help promote a positive sense of wellbeing.

As part of our ongoing remote learning offer to all of our students, we continue to harness the potential of online platforms and apps. Whilst these tools offer us a great way of working, they do require us to be more mindful than ever before of e-safety and staying safe online. To support families, we have listed below some guidance and expectations for students participating in online live lessons with staff.

We ask that you please discuss the following guidance and expectations with your child to ensure that staff and students can make the most of the fantastic technology available to us, in the safest possible way. All behaviour and conduct expectations remain exactly the same for students who are learning remotely, just as they would if they were learning within school.

- Students should be fully dressed, wearing appropriate daytime clothing which is suitable for a live learning environment. Please ensure that your son/daughter is aware that nightwear, or being partially dressed, is not acceptable attire for participating in live lessons.
- No 1:1 live lessons should take place between staff and students. Live lessons will be delivered as group lessons only and students should not request individual 1:1 live lessons with members of staff.
- Language used must be professional and appropriate, including that of any family members in the background who may be overheard.
- Students should register for live lesson software (e.g. Teams) using only their school email account and not a personal email account.
- Live lessons will only be held during a planned teaching time outlined by the individual member of staff. These will always be held at times which fall between the normal school opening hours of 8:45am-3:00pm.
- Students should familiarise themselves with how to use the camera/microphone controls within the programme, so that they have the ability to turn them on/off as they wish. Staff can assist with explaining how to do this during a live lesson setup.
- Live lessons must not be recorded by students.
- Students should ensure that their account/profile name appears as their own first name and surname and that no alternative names/nicknames are used. When using a family device/account, ensure that the account/profile name is edited to appear as the students' name only.

In addition to the live lesson guidance above, we would also like to take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of general online e-safety and staying safe online. Further information can be found on the NSPCC website by following the link: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>.

As a Trust, we have access to a limited bank of loan devices and Wi-Fi dongles for students who are without access to a device or reliable connection at home. These devices can be loaned on a short-term basis as required to support students in continuing their engagement and access to learning. To request support with loaning a device please contact the ICT systems team using the information below.

Please remember that our ICT Systems Team are available to support with technology related questions/queries during the working day. Please let them know if you are having any internet, email other software or hardware issues and they will do their utmost to support your child. They can be contacted by emailing: [ictsystemteam@universityofkentacademiestrust.org.uk](mailto:ictsystemsteam@universityofkentacademiestrust.org.uk).

Free School Meals

Students continuing to attend the academies who are eligible for Free School Meals will be provided with a meal onsite. The Government have not yet announced if the national voucher

scheme will be reintroduced during this period of national lockdown. Therefore, the Trust will provide supermarket vouchers to any eligible children who are continuing their learning at home. These will be sent by email directly from 'School Vouchers' on a weekly basis. We will provide a further update should Government guidance on Free School Meals change.

GCSE, A Level and BTEC Examinations

You may well be aware that the government has cancelled the summer exams.

Further information about how the summer grades will be derived will be given to you as soon as we have an update. However, please be reassured that in 2019, both academies operated a successful system, where mock examinations and a range of other evidence were used to derive the Teacher Assessment Grades. All of these grades were checked thoroughly for accuracy and fairness, before being submitted to examination boards. Although not yet confirmed, it is likely that a similar system will be operated this year and our staff are already making preparations.

On 6th January, academies were given the authority to decide the best course of action for the upcoming January BTEC examinations and those students and parents will have already been contacted about this.

Other Points

For safety reasons, please could I ask you to avoid coming on to either of our academy sites and to use the telephone and emails to discuss issues with staff. Our general email accounts will be checked daily and are: office@bromptonacademy.org.uk or officecg@universityofkentacademiestrust.org.uk.

We have made the decision to postpone the Year 11 and Year 12/13 parent/carer evenings planned for Thursday 14th January and Thursday 21st January. Once we have further information from the Department for Education on the awarding of grades this year, we will be in contact to share this with you and arrange new dates for these evenings to take place online.

I would also encourage you to keep checking communications such as emails, social media and our websites, as I am sure we can expect further updates from the government.

Best wishes and stay safe until better times are upon us.

Yours faithfully,

**Philip Storey
UKAT CEO**