

6th January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

Re: COVID19 Update – National Lockdown

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday that all schools + colleges will be closed until at least the end of February half term and a follow up statement specifically on schools this afternoon in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Education, I wanted to provide you with an update on the impact that this will have on the Ormiston Park Community.

Is the academy open?

The academy will remain open for onsite learning for both ASCEND students and will offer an onsite provision for Year 7 – 11 vulnerable students and students who have a parent who is a critical worker / key worker. Parents of these students have been contacted and a number of these students have returned to the academy today.

How will remote learning work?

All Year 7-11 students remote learning at home (and our vulnerable students and students of critical workers / key workers who are attending the onsite provision) will have access to live lessons via Microsoft Teams. Lessons will be delivered to the normal timetable. Classwork, homework and assessments will all take place on Microsoft Teams throughout this half term and students will be expected to attend and fully participate in all lessons. From next week we will introduce Tutor Time and assemblies into the online timetable. If a student requires an exercise book and a pen to support remote home learning these can be collected from the academy reception from Friday 8th January (we currently have enough to distribute 1 exercise book and 1 pen for each child in the academy).

What if I have access issues?

If you do not have access to remote learning either through a lack of internet or suitable device, please inform the academy as soon as possible via opainfo@ormistonpark.org.uk

What is happening to GCSE + Vocational exams this year?

Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, reaffirmed today that GCSE exams 'will not go ahead this summer'. He said that grades will be based on teacher assessed grades. Grades will not be adjusted by an algorithm. There will be consultation with Ofqual, exam boards and teaching representatives (two weeks – unconfirmed) to decide on the criteria for teacher assessed grades. Williamson said that teachers would have training and support so that no student would be disadvantaged.

Vocational exams, such as BTECs are carrying on, if schools decide to continue with them. After discussion this evening with the academy senior leadership team, it has been decided that we will not be run the two vocational exams planned to place next week in Hospitality + Catering and Creative iMedia. We do not think it is fair or representative to undertake exams in these COVID19 conditions and following the educational announcements this week. The government say there will be opportunities later in the year for students to take vocational exams if they choose to. Mrs Thacker (Assistant Principal) will send a follow up letter on exams to Year 11 students.

What if my child is entitled to Free School Meals and they are not in the academy?

The government announced today that they would again be setting up the voucher system used during Lockdown 1 to make payment to parents of children entitled to Free School Meals. Until the Government system is in place, we will make a Free School weekly payment to parents of children entitled to Free School Meals via Parentpay.

Has the academy been able to set up COVID19 Lateral Flow Testing?

We received the testing kit and PPE on Monday morning. On Tuesday we set up a mass testing area and a contact's testing area and trained / certified a set of willing OPA staff who will administer the Lateral Flow Tests. Today we have conducted a pilot Lateral Flow testing with our first students. We will continue to test ASCEND students and vulnerable students and students who have a parent who is a critical worker / key worker this week. From next week staff working on site will be tested weekly along with our students, to ensure we are as safe as we can be. We have plans for mass testing of Year 7-11 on their return and these will be shared at a later date.

We will continue to stay in touch and update you in regard to COVID19, and about your child's education. However, please do let me know if you would like to discuss anything further, or if you require any support relating to these new arrangements by using our new contact emailing address opainfo@ormistonpark.org.uk.

I would once again like to take this opportunity to thank you wholeheartedly for your understanding and ongoing support in helping us to manage this unprecedented situation. Please continue to take care and to stay safe.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Roessler
Principal
Ormiston Park Academy