

24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Update letter for families – 24th April**

I'd like to begin by sending you all my very best wishes on behalf of the college. As we complete our third week of 'remote/virtual' school, our staff are working hard to refine the process and find new ways to maximise its impact. Equally, I am sure that you at home are settling into routines and patterns that best fit your circumstances.

We know that many of you are juggling huge demands and pressures right now. I want to thank you for the time you are taking in supporting your child to continue their studies, as well as reassure you that we understand that learning from home will not always be easy. We don't want to make your lives any more difficult than possible, but we really want to help our students keep on top of their learning and maintain good habits of personal and physical development.

Across the country, resources and activities are being published and shared to help students and enrich their learning during this time. Our teachers may sometimes direct you to these sites and resources as one of the activities that they set. However, so that we know the content and sequence of learning you are undertaking, I would ask that you continue to take direction from our teachers on the best activities to undertake.

Many of you and/or your children will have been contacted this week by the House team or their tutors. The purpose of this contact is to support them in their learning and help students and families with any problems or barriers. I know that these discussions have been useful for many of you, and I'd like to encourage you to contact us with any questions or worries you have. If you have not been contacted this week, you can expect to hear from a member of staff over the course of next week. We remain ready and available to help!

Some of you may be interested in what international research tells us works most effectively to maintain learning and progress during times such as this. [This paper from John Hattie](#) is very informative on learning from home and is helping inform our approaches. This week a national helpline has also been established, offering free, confidential advice to parents and carers to support home learning. For more information, visit [www.starline.org.uk](http://www.starline.org.uk)

### **Childcare Provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable students**

Please remember that school remains open to provide childcare to the children of key workers and vulnerable students. If you have not yet accessed this provision, please remember that it is available and do not hesitate to sign up if it helps you at this time.

The guidance around eligibility of places for the children and key workers, as well as those students who may be deemed as 'vulnerable' [can be read here](#). May I ask that anyone seeking to access this provision registers their need on the [survey linked here](#).

If you have any questions about the provision that are not answered through the link above, please contact [worried@elycollege.co.uk](mailto:worried@elycollege.co.uk)

### Transport

There are currently two services running to bring eligible children to the college for our childcare provision. Both will be small minibus-type vehicles.

<b>Route A:</b> Soham & Fordham to Ely College	<b>Route B:</b> Littleport, Pymoor & Little Downham to Ely College
Monday to Friday during term time	Monday to Friday during term time
0740hrs - Soham – Townsend/Northfield 0748hrs - Fordham – Collins Hill 0754hrs - Isleham – Pound Lane Bus Shelter 0806hrs - Prickwillow – 4 Mile End 0808hrs - Prickwillow – Kingdon Ave 0811hrs - Queen Adelaide – Bus Shelter 0815hrs - Ely College	0745hrs - Hale Fen – 21 Hale Fen 0755hrs - Littleport – Crescent 0757hrs - Littleport - Crown Lane 0802hrs - Littleport – Wisbech Road – Butchers Hill Farm 0810hrs - Pymoor – Corner 0816hrs - Little Downham – Cannon Street 0820hrs - Ely College
A return service, covering the route in the reverse order will be offered from the College on conclusion of the day’s activities, departing between 3:00pm and 3:30pm.	A return service, covering the route in the reverse order will be offered from the College on conclusion of the day’s activities, departing between 3:00pm and 3:30pm.

### Remote/online learning activities

We’ve taken some useful feedback from parents on how their children (and they!) are coping with accessing work. A couple of points are outlined below in response to common questions.

**Accessing work on multiple platforms** – We are aware that there are several different ‘platforms’ or internet sites that students are accessing work on, and that this isn’t always easy to navigate. We took the decision to make Microsoft TEAMS the ‘base’ for all classes because it offered the best means of managing the process of setting learning activities and interaction between the teachers and classes. Some subjects and teachers are directing students from TEAMS to work that is set on SMHW because that is an established and understood base for existing resources and activities.

We have asked teachers to ensure that learning activities are only directed through the ‘Assignments’ function on TEAMS rather than in the ‘Posts’ function for the sake of ease and clarity. We are aware that this hasn’t always been consistent and are trying to make sure that improves.

**Deadlines** – Some students and parents are feeling worried or anxious about meeting ‘deadlines’ set through TEAMS. Please be assured that deadlines are suggested timeframes for the completion of work. We will not be setting retrospective detentions or punishments where students do not complete learning activities within the timeframe suggested. We are, however, monitoring engagement with learning and will be in contact to help and support/encourage if we see that learning activities are not being completed.

**Feedback** – We are keen that students keep in contact with their teacher. While work will not be ‘marked’ in the same way that it would be when school is open as usual, teachers will provide general or specific feedback to students if they have shared or submitted work, or if they have a question. The ‘Posts’ function in TEAMS and email is the best means for that.

**Submitting/uploading work** – Some students have struggled with uploading or sending work to their teacher via TEAMS. A guide to doing this [can be found here](#).

### **Access to remote/online learning activities**

We know that access to computers has become more difficult for some families than it was a month ago due to changes in working arrangements. You may have read that the government hope to make some computers available to priority students in the coming weeks. We have already submitted our request to them, and I hope that they will move swiftly to get this equipment to students. We will update you when we hear more.

If access to IT has become a problem for you, can you please inform either your child’s Senior Tutor or SSA or, if you prefer, use the [worried@elycollege.co.uk](mailto:worried@elycollege.co.uk) email address. Although we may not be able to provide instant solutions, it is important that we are aware of any challenges you are facing so that we can advise and offer help.

### **Summer exams – the latest details and a call to respond to the consultation**

I have previously shared with you the available information on how the government proposes that grades and qualifications are awarded to students who would have sat exams this summer. The details [can be read here](#), and a letter to students [can be read here](#). In addition, a video has been produced that explains the approach that will be taken this summer. [It can be viewed here](#).

A [consultation has now been launched](#) on their proposals for summer exams; this includes a proposal that Year 10 students who were due to be entered for qualifications in 2020 be treated in the same way as applies to Year 11. I’d like to encourage parents to respond to this consultation, which closes on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

Can I remind all Year 13 students who are progressing to Higher Education that they should continue to register for student finance and accommodation despite the current situation. Advice is available from the sixth form team to any students who require help with this.

### **Free School Meals entitlement**

This week we have transitioned from the interim system we established before Easter, to the new national voucher system for ensuring eligible families receive equivalent funds to help with the cost of food during this period.

We are aware that there have been examples of a scam email claiming to be from the Department of Education and asking for the bank details of people receiving free school meal vouchers. **The**

**college will NEVER ask for your bank details for the FSM voucher system.** Please do not give your bank details to anyone whose identity you are not certain of.

If you need any further information, or if your situation has changed and you think you may have become eligible very recently, please contact [freeschoolmeals@cmatrust.net](mailto:freeschoolmeals@cmatrust.net) or [worried@elycollege.co.uk](mailto:worried@elycollege.co.uk) for advice.

### **Year 10 Work Experience**

It is with regret that I must inform you that Year 10 Work Experience, due to take place at the end of June, has been cancelled. This probably does not come as a shock to you, but the final decision was made for a number of reasons:

- We are unsure as to when schools will reopen and the background work that must be completed is unlikely to be completed in time.
- Businesses, if open, will need to be concentrating on re-establishing themselves.

Above all is the reason that we cannot guarantee the safety of students going into the workplace in the same way we would normally do and we are not prepared to risk their health or those of their family at this time.

If you have any questions please direct them to Dr Norton-Berry at [knorton-berry@elycollege.co.uk](mailto:knorton-berry@elycollege.co.uk)

### **Communications**

We are trying to use our website and social media platforms on Facebook and Twitter to share good news and updates with you throughout this period. I've been uploading weekly video messages to families online for the past few weeks and hope to keep on doing so until we are back in college.

Please send me, or the House teams, any good news stories or images for us to share with our college community. For example, it has been lovely to read about the charitable and voluntary activities so many of our students have been undertaking. It has also been wonderful to be able to share the ongoing efforts of the Design Technology team in manufacturing more than 1000 items of PPE to healthcare providers in the area.

For those of you who are finding this time difficult, we have a range of advice and contacts for support on our website under the tab ['Feeling worried or anxious?'](#).

I know that some of you are.

Please continue to take good care of yourselves.

Yours faithfully



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## If home isn't safe, support is available

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, you can get help:

Cambridge Women's Aid (City, East, South Cambridgeshire): 01223 361214  
Refuge (Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough): 07787 255821  
National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247  
Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327  
LGBT Helpline: 0800 999 5428  
In an emergency call 999

For more information visit [www.cambsdasv.org.uk](http://www.cambsdasv.org.uk)



11-19 years old? Need confidential help and advice?

Start a chat with a health professional

Find your local text helpline at [chathealth.nhs.uk](http://chathealth.nhs.uk)

