



# ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL

## Parent Bulletin

29th January 2021

### Information

Dear Parents and Students,

It has no doubt been another tough week for everyone - and especially those facing sickness and bereavement, to whom we send our best wishes. Remember every day passing is a day closer to the end of this.

Our thoughts go especially to the significant number of our parent body who work in primary schools. While it's not NHS work, we know how hard it is to run a secondary school in lockdown, and primary schools are tending to have to both run half classes of key worker children and simultaneously do remote learning for others. I am in awe.

#### **Guidance for students in exam years and their parents**

It would be lovely to be able to give you more pointers as to how the grade award process is going to run; but the Ofqual consultation only finishes today, and the constantly moving expectations of when face to face working will start again will have to be factored into the DfE's deliberations. From what I hear, the vast majority of you are working hard and to good effect, and a bit like an Olympic Athlete, all one can do is prepare hard and hope that pays off. "There's no point" should have no place in your thinking, and everything you are doing now counts - unlike lockdown 1 last March no-one has said that work in lockdown cannot count towards teacher judgements. Given, like most of my empty teenage years even without a pandemic, there is no exciting social life to engage with, cracking on with work now makes good sense.

You might feel a bit vexed by the lack of clarity. We are not. Senior school staff have absolute confidence that we can cope with whatever the powers that be decide, confidence in our staff, and determination to make sure the arrangements will be properly applied. We have confidence that even if time back face to face is limited, we can do a thorough job. Students and parents can be assured we will be doing our very best to fairly say what standard students are working at, and what grade they thus should be awarded. This stands to be done around May/June time. We believe that our sister secondary schools in town will do an equally careful job.

If you are interested in the latest from Ofqual on what role some kind of centrally set test might play in teacher assessments its here-

<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2021/01/29/consultation-update-and-a-proposal-for-externally-set-papers/>

In short, any such test, like any data point, would be only one thing that a teacher would take into account.

#### **Confidence and trust in grade award**

We know from some exam board scrutiny (which took place over the autumn of our work to generate last summer's grades) that our processes passed even the most detailed checks with flying colours. While it's really time consuming and irksome to have to go through such inspection, it is a big boost to our confidence to know that even in lockdown 1, we were able to design and execute a really robust system.



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**It's really important from the outset that all parents and students set out with trust that our school, and all schools, will run things fairly.** In 2020 there was chat that one school or another was being more or less generous yadda yadda. This is a destructive way of thinking, which sets you up to position yourself as a victim of a system loaded against one, not as the recipient of your teacher's best professional judgement.

There should be no big surprises - **there will be a need to respect judgments fairly arrived at.** We are pleased that we decided not to accept for exam entry a private candidate by the name of D. J. Trump for Government and Politics A-level: heaven knows how his grade award process would have played out.

### **One apology for last Friday's issue of Year 11 mock and Year 12 progress review data**

I am afraid we have some organisational inertia, in that we would always normally issue these sorts of reports on Fridays so that we could use Friday period 5 to talk over any issues, disappointments etc, and try to make sure students go home in a balanced frame of mind.

I didn't think through with colleagues that you as parents and students would get this data unvarnished on a Friday late pm, with little opportunity to have some dialogue or support as we are trying to discourage staff from working over the weekend as much as usual - firstly because weekdays are all so full on, but also because we want to be able to distinguish weekdays from weekends for the sake of sanity. We will try to do better, and in future see if high stakes data sets and things like prefect announcements can go on Thursday pm, not Friday. I am sorry if parents and students, in some cases, ended up stressed and with no immediate member of staff to turn to.

### **Student engagement ! Mostly great...**

We have multiple different systems running to track who is and isn't keeping up, from tutor zooms, to staff referral systems where children are not attending zoom / submitting work, and data tracking (on Monday 1226 students completed some activity on Google Classroom, over 90% of the student body). Perhaps because we took a while to get regular zoom contact up and running with Key Stage three, some of those students are being the least reliable at turning up for Zoom sessions (esp if its a subject they find more challenging). Of course, if they fail to turn up, it wastes the effort of staff and puts us to extra work chasing them. If your child is in years 7-9, please ask them what zooms they have each day - they should know by 0900 each day at the latest. Equally, we know the workload in written form for that phase of the school can be too much, and we are trying to dial this down. Which links to..

### **Pessimism about the educational impact of lockdown.**

I see our Prime Minister talked about it maybe taking a year to catch up the effects of the pandemic. He seems to alternate between optimism and pessimism, whereas my mantra in life has always been "Things are never as bad, or as good, as they seem."

I can only speak from personal experience but in skill levels and content terms my Year 10 and 12 Historians are exactly up to the standard I would expect of any year's class. And they have developed resilience, skill in independent learning, new IT skills, to counterbalance the struggles we know they will have emotionally and mentally.



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The staff have the same struggles - but we have done three years worth of organisational and personal IT skill development in the last year, with online parents evenings and 16-19 info evenings and option evenings, virtual open days, Zoom, Loom, Mote, whiteboard.fe

We should be hugely positive about all we are achieving, for all its defects, however hard it feels.

### **Welfare survey**

As well as the survey we did last week on student's experience of remote learning (which we will repeat next week), this week we sent to all students a welfare survey to help inform how successfully we are being able to support students having issues. To date 564 students have completed the survey and as parents you will be pleased to know that, despite the struggles of the situation we are all in, students have reported positively on the whole as to how they are feeling, how they are coping, how well they are utilising their support network and what positive steps they are building into their daily routine to look after their own wellbeing. It is interesting to see just how many students have, for example, reached out to close family and friends (and pets!), gone for a walk or done some exercise. It has become so easy during lockdown to go days without fresh air so if you have found yourself in this boat, do get outside this weekend. If your son or daughter is struggling, do remind them of their support network here at school starting with their Head of House and their House Pastoral Assistant. We are here to help and we want to help.

### **Do you have a young person in years 10 to 13 who is struggling to access a lap-top at home?**

We have sourced a few additional lap-tops for those who need one. If you are interested, then please contact [krobertson@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk](mailto:krobertson@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk)

Likewise, if you have lap-top that you would like to donate, then please drop it off at the Aim Higher entrance during a weekday morning. Our ICT Department is doing an amazing job of making them student-ready. Thanks.

### **Contacting the Head**

Please be advised that the most appropriate way of contacting the Headmistress is via [admin@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk). We can reassure you that this email account is only accessible by the Headmistress and her PA. [hbarton@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk](mailto:hbarton@stgeorges.herts.sch.uk) is only active as the Headmistress has been a member of the school community for so long. It is not looked at on a regular basis, and is only accessible to her on her mobile phone. Communication sent to hbarton@ is likely to be missed or not responded to as it is not the Headmistress's daily view for work.

## **Actions**

### **Booking for Monty's key worker school**

Remember you may need to cut and paste this link into your web browser to get it to work.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/65K2BBJ>



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### Thoughts

Not much thought today, just an image. This is a shot of Kate Doyle, with the ball, at an Under 15b match at lacrosse nationals maybe 7 years ago; not a very important moment in not a very important match. What's notable is not Kate (sorry Kate, but your non dom hand position is well dodgy). It's what you see on the sideline. **Thanks to all our amazing supporters for helping sustain our collective team effort through this month.**



### Signposting (click on each to find out more)

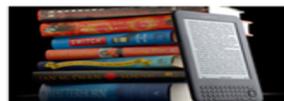
## READING CLOUD



Reading Cloud is St. George's online Library catalogue and can be accessed online, either via the Reading Cloud website <https://www.readingcloud.net/>, or by downloading the Reading Cloud iMLS Student app for Apple, iOS or Android devices.

#### To log on:

- Username: School email address
- Password: Date of birth (ddmmyyy)
- School: AL5 4TD



#### You can use Reading Cloud to:

- Access 1600+ eBooks which can be borrowed if available, or you can place reservations (can borrow 5 books for up to 14 days and renew them)
- Search for resources by title, author and subject
- Search for recommended reads with *Who Next*
- Check out most popular reads and *Book of the Week*
- Write and share book reviews
- Read the latest Library news.....



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### **Hertfordshire Libraries Ready Reads service supports home schooling**

We all know how important it is for children to have access to books. Despite the current lockdown situation, Hertfordshire libraries are open for Ready Reads.

Families can order books for their children and themselves using the [online form](#) and then collect from a selected library. If families are unable to access online services, please contact us on 0300 123 4049 and a member of our team will be able to help fill out the form.

We understand some families have not felt able to visit the library for a while, this is an easy way to borrow. Also, our requests service is fully operational so for specific books these can be ordered through our catalogue and picked up in the same way.

### **We also have an extensive online eBook and eAudio library BorrowBox.**

Never have books been more important, not only supporting children with their reading and education but also with their health and wellbeing, enabling them to leave behind the daily stresses and escape into imaginary worlds.

You can find the latest information about Hertfordshire libraries reopening plans and our online services on [our website](#).

### **Free access to online newspapers and magazines**

If you are an individual member of the Hertfordshire Library Service you are entitled to free access to online newspapers and magazines. These are great for providing information for learning as well as reading for pleasure. With many young people being taught remotely from home, this is an excellent service to make use of.

Both the magazines and papers can be read on your browser via the library website or downloaded to read on your device. You will need to set up an account for both these services. Library staff will be happy to answer any questions please contact your local library. If you are not already a library member and would like to join then you can join online Please do take advantage of this free service to keep up to date with everything that's happening in our fast changing world.



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GOV.UK/counterfraud

Government Counter Fraud Function

NHS Counter Fraud Authority

### COVID-19: VACCINE FRAUD

Crimes are using the COVID-19 vaccine as a way to target the public by trying to get to their car, cash or financial details. They are sending convincing looking text messages using words that they are reliable for the vaccine or getting people directly promising to be from the NHS, or local pharmacy.



**PEOPLE ARE WARNED TO BE ALERT TO THESE SCAMS**

The **NHS** will:

- NEVER ask for payment - the vaccine is free
- NEVER ask for your bank details
- NEVER arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine
- NEVER ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport

**TOP 4 VACCINE SCAMS**



**TEXT MESSAGES**

People are asked to prove a vaccine or that they've got a car or cash to receive the vaccine. They will be asked to send in a photo of their bank card or passport details. Payment is made to their bank account.



**PHONE CALLS**

People receive a phone call from a fake caller offering the vaccine for a free or asking for bank details.



**WEBSITES**

Fake NHS sites are sending looking like NHS websites. They will be asking for bank details and other personal information. If the cost of the vaccine is asked for, it will be a scam.



**IN PERSON**

People are being asked to prove their identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport. If the cost of the vaccine is asked for, it will be a scam.

GOV.UK/counterfraud

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**LIKE OTHER SCAMS, THE SAME ADVICE APPLIES:**

- 1 Challenge - Could it be real? It's ok to report, refuse or ignore any requests that don't feel right. Check GOV.UK to ensure it's genuine.
- 2 Do not respond to text messages that try to get you to send money or important personal information such as bank details or passwords.
- 3 Use official government websites and refer to 'Contact Us' sections of websites to access information and services.
- 4 Challenge unannounced callers to your home, NHS visits if necessary will be agreed with you directly or via letters, they will never turn up unannounced.

**EXAMPLES OF SCAMS**



**FURTHER GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Public Sector Organisations**

The Cabinet Office has formed a COVID-19 Fraud Response Team to assist the government with its counter-fraud response. Requests for assistance should be emailed to: [counterfraud@casoffice.gov.uk](mailto:counterfraud@casoffice.gov.uk)

**Police**

**National Cyber Security Centre** - If you receive a call or message that looks like a scam, report it to [ncsc@ncsc.gov.uk](mailto:ncsc@ncsc.gov.uk). Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to the number 7726 which is free of charge.

**Action Fraud** - If you believe you have been the victim of fraud or identity theft, you should report this directly to Action Fraud either online, [actionfraud.police.uk](http://actionfraud.police.uk) or on phone 0300 123 3333.

**Crime Stoppers** - If you have any information leading to someone that you can help, please contact the Community Crime Stoppers COVID-19 Fraud Hotline online, [communitycrime.com](http://communitycrime.com) or phone 0800 557 4444.