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Dear Parents and Carers

Coronavirus Update – 24th March 2020

As a school we fully appreciate that you may be feeling stressed, overwhelmed and under pressure at present, most especially about the education of your child or children. Many teachers are parents or carers, so they fully understand the challenges you are currently facing. To help facilitate safeguarding, the teaching and learning process, progress grades and the Year 9 options' process, I would like to offer some guidance.

Firstly, this is not home-schooling. Teachers are trying to make the best of a situation that has never before affected so many. Lessons that teachers deliver each and every day are planned for a classroom environment, where students can ask questions and tasks can be explained to them: it will take time for teachers, students, parents and carers to become used to the new way of delivering teaching and learning.

Many of you are working from home and this will, quite correctly, be your primary concern; students will take time to adapt and become independent, but in the mean time they will require your support and encouragement. We are a school that listens to feedback, so bear with us as the staff learn, adapt and evolve into the new circumstances: like you, we had just two days' notice of the school closure.

Safeguarding

During the temporary school closure, we have made arrangements for a Safeguarding email address to be accessible, should any student feel the need to speak with a trusted adult. They should use their school email address where possible and contact the following email address: safeguarding@gms.bucks.sch.uk

This email address can also be used by parents/ carers should there be a need to discuss an urgent safeguarding matter. This email address will be monitored from 8.30am - 4.30pm and must be used only for safeguarding matters. Please do not use this email address for any other queries about examinations, progress grades, Coronavirus updates, trips or classwork.

Other agencies offer support, too:

- Buckinghamshire First Response Team – 01296 383962/ Emergency Duty Team – 0800 999 7677
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- 101 for a non-emergency Police matter or 999 in an emergency

Please keep these details easily available and thank you in advance for only using the Safeguarding email when necessary.

Progress Reports

Year 7/ 8: These grades will be issued on Friday 3rd April 2020. Subject related issues should be directed to the class teacher and more general issues to the Director of Learning. For Year 7 this is Miss J Bawden – jbawden@gms.bucks.sch.uk and for Year 8 this is Miss R Mapes – rmapes@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Year 9: Progress grades will be issued on Friday 27th March 2020. Hopefully, these will help students make an informed decision on their option choices for GCSE. All subject related issues relating to the progress grades should be directed to the class teacher. If the issue is more general, or one that is related to the options' process, it should be directed to Mr Ross the Director of Learning for Year 9 - sross@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Year 10: Progress grades will be issued on Monday 30th March 2020. These progress grades will show the target grade for each student and a predicted grade, for each subject. This is not a working at grade; it is the grade that the class teacher is predicting students will achieve, based on assessments completed and the teachers' professional judgement. If there is an issue relating to a progress grade this should be directed, in the first instance, to the class teacher for that subject. If there is a more general issue relating to your son/daughter please contact Mr Wilson who is the Director of Learning for Year 10 - swilson@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Most staff are now working remotely, consequently our processes are taking longer than normal, which could affect the proposed issue date for progress grades, any delay will be communicated to you.

Year 9 Option Process:

As highlighted above, the Progress Grades for Year 9 will be issued on Friday 27th March and should be used to help your child make an informed choice about options. We have taken the decision to move the deadline date for completion of the online form to 9am on Friday 24th April 2020. The online options' form can be accessed and completed anytime between now and the deadline. As stated on Options' Evening, we do our very best to enable students to have their preferred choices, but a careful consideration of reserve choices is important, just in case first choice preferences cannot be accommodated. If you require further subject related support, please contact your son/daughter's class teacher. More general questions relating to the options' process should be directed to Mr Ross.

Student Learning

- All work and supporting materials will be uploaded onto Show My Homework (SMHW) before 9am each day.
- Access all the tasks and complete them in the lesson order of your timetable. It is important every day is structured.
- The work that staff set should be completed in the way signalled by the teacher setting the task/s: this could be in your exercise books, workbooks, folders or on paper, alternatively it could be sent via SMHW or uploaded to the shared area on the school drive, through Foldr.
- Title and date all work as you would in a lesson.
- Find a quiet place where you can concentrate: as this is a different way to learn having a secure working environment is important.
- Have realistic expectations of yourself because, at first, it may be difficult to sustain 5 hours of individual work a day.
- Year 11 and Year 13 students – in most subject areas the course content has been completed or is close to completion – teaching staff will continue to set work up to and including what would have been your leaving day (Year 11 – 21st May 2020 and Year 13 - 22nd May 2020), unless examinations would have been completed prior to this date.
- Year 11: in the summer term staff will be set individual research and project work to help students become sixth-form ready.
- **If you need to communicate with staff, (students) please use your school email address and the subject teacher's school email address.**

Setting of work – Parents/ Carers

- Staff will set work on Show My Homework
- This will be set by 9am each day for all lessons that day.
- Where possible provide a designated area for your son/ daughter to work in.
- As this is a different way of teaching and learning, please have realistic expectations of your son/ daughter. Five hours of individual work a day maybe difficult to sustain at first. Teachers will aim to use a variety of activities to facilitate learning and engage students.
- If there is an issue or question that you need to ask, please either communicate directly with the class teacher, or encourage the student to do so. **Students must only use their school email address to contact members of staff.**

Communication

To ensure all questions and issues are addressed as efficiently and effectively as possible, please direct them to the correct person:

Classwork issue – in the first instance this should be directed to the class teacher and if further contact/ clarification is required then the Head of Department for that subject.

General issue relating to a student in a year group – this should be directed to the Director of Learning for that year group.

Safeguarding issue – see correspondence at the start of this letter.

General school issue – info@gms.bucks.sch.uk

All staff emails are the teacher's first initial, followed by the surname @gms.bucks.sch.uk. Therefore, Mr Stuart Ross is sross@gms.bucks.sch.uk

In addition, students when logged in to their email account, can put the surname of the staff member they wish to email in the To: (box) and the email address will appear.

Email communication from the school/members of staff will only occur between 8.00am and 4.30pm, during a working day, unless there are exceptional circumstances. We will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible, but this will not necessarily be the same day.

The Voice – Great Marlow School's Online Magazine

It is our intention to publish this term's edition of The Voice as usual, just before the Easter break. Moving forward, however, we wish this publication to become a forum for stories, pictures and accounts of the way in which you, your family, friends and others in the community are demonstrating responsibility, resilience and resourcefulness in these unprecedented times. So please send information to info@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Yours faithfully

Mr Kevin Ford
Headteacher