

01 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Well done to all our students once again for coping so well in these strange times. We continue to see fantastic attendance and work completion rates by our students. I know that teachers are also really engaged with Teams lessons and are getting really good responses during lessons. Thank you as Parents or Carers for all the support you are providing – I am aware that many of you have also had to brush up on your Science, Maths, Geography, History, French and so forth. If you are having any IT access issues or need online support please contact our IT Helpdesk (itstudentsupport@birchwoodhigh.org.uk)

Looking ahead, it is sometimes difficult to navigate school provision with the uncertainty around the Covid pandemic as we battle lower infection rates and vaccinations against new strains of the virus. What we do know is that we will continue to provide on-line remote learning up until Friday 5 March and that there will be an announcement over half-term by the DfE regarding what happens after this point. Half Term (15-19 February) will be a break for everyone so our hard working students can get some time away from their screens and staff spend time with their families. Options from 8 March could include a return for some year groups (eg Year 11 and 13) but it is unlikely that we will see a full return to school until after Easter.

So how are we fairing at the moment? Thank you to the many students and parents who completed our recent Survey Monkey questionnaire. A summary is detailed below:

Parent Survey:

- 489 parents responded.
- 85% say their children are coping ok or happy in lockdown. 15% say they are 'struggling'.
- 88% say their children said they had completed all, or most, of the work set. One response said none of it.
- 98% say their children have access to technology.
- 57% of parents say that their child spends 4 hours or more on schoolwork. Only 3% spend less than an hour. 73% think the time is about right.
- 85% are at least somewhat confident with TEAMS.
- 82% are quite or very happy with remote learning procedures. 5% are unhappy with remote learning.
- The words 'live lessons' occurred 77 times (plus 26 in the final question).

Student Survey:



- 408 responses from students.
- 86% are okay or happy. 14% are struggling.
- 93% are doing 'most' or 'all' of the work set.
- 99% have access to technology that is 'easy' or have 'some' connection problems.
- 80% are 'very' or 'extremely' confident in using Teams but 0.5% are 'not at all confident'.

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- 37% prefer live lessons. 41% prefer a mixture of live and set work. 17% prefer work left in TEAMS and 4% have no preference.
- 23% say they are spending more than 5 hours on work; 36% between 3-4 hours. 5% say less than an hour.
- Most students say they are getting fresh air etc but 3% say they are not leaving the house at all.
- Overall, most students felt confident to ask their teacher for help via Teams or SMHW.
- 51% say they don't ask often, but would if they needed to.
- Form time came out as very positive and most felt that they could easily contact their form tutor or Head of Year for support.

Overall, this is a very positive survey. The main issue that emerges for me is that there are some students or parents still struggling - so if you are reading this and feel you need personal help or IT help, please let us know. We are likely to continue to operate using live lessons for the next 4 weeks at least.

Other News:

- We will be sending home a half termly **Birchwood News** next week celebrating, once again, some really excellent work being submitted to teachers during lockdown.
- **Year 11 Sixth Form Interviews** are underway and those interviewing have been very impressed with the calibre of the students – with over 150 applications and 120 external applications, we should have a thriving Year 12 next year. For these students, I am hopeful that life after their GCSEs should be far more 'normal'.
- Equally, **Year 13** are working closely with their Form Tutors and Mrs Crimes, our Careers Advisor, to ensure everyone goes on to their chosen next step – we have a record number of University Applications currently with UCAS and have also had successful offers from Oxford and Cambridge University.
- **Year 8 Options** launch has been deferred to 29 April to ensure parents receive Interim Reports and a Parents Evening with subject teachers first. Hopefully we will have Year 8 back in the building by then and the process of explaining and discussing Options would be a lot easier.
- **Year 10 Parents' Evening** is scheduled for Tuesday 9 February – you will receive shortly a link to book online appointments with your child's teachers. Feedback so far from Year 11 and 7 online parents' evenings has been very positive with high attendance rates – the bonus being that you do not have to go out in the cold and dark to speak to teachers.
- **Period 5 on 9 February** will be a well-being afternoon to allow staff to prepare for the Parent's Evening.
- **Key Worker / SEND students:** Please note that we have moved the Lateral Flow Testing to Monday 22 February immediately after half term – for other weeks it will remain on Tuesday Mornings.

Thank you for your continued support.

Keep safe.

Yours sincerely

Chris Ingate

Dr Chris Ingate
Principal