

12 February 2021

Dear Families,

I write to you at a time of continued anxiety and uncertainty for us all. On Monday 22 February we are hoping to hear from the Prime Minister about the government's plans for their 'roadmap' to recovery from COVID. I hope, as I am sure you do, that children can come back to school from 8 March this year; however, at this current moment, I still have no idea what this will look like. I hope to be writing to you after half term with some answers and, until then, I want to reaffirm our commitment to supporting you and your children through the remainder of this current lockdown and beyond.

As always, we are committed to our community and want to support you as much as we can. If there is anything at all you would like support with – from food shortages to your wellbeing, please use the contacts at the end of this letter.

Remote Learning

I just wanted to remind families of how to access remote learning. I would expect by now that all students have logged on and managed to access TEAMS.

Please do encourage your child as much as possible to access their online learning. We still have some students who have yet to engage and I am sure that you can appreciate that this is further disadvantaging them in comparison to the children who are accessing this provision. If you are struggling, please do contact us for support. We are currently making 'phone calls home to all families; we have started by prioritising those who have yet to log in to their online learning, or to complete a paper work pack.

If your child is still struggling to access their remote learning, please email the class teacher to let them know and they will try to support you in the first instance. If your child cannot access their school email or password, please email info@dixonsua.com or call reception and the admin team will organise for your child's details to be reset so they can log in. If you are unable to get online, we will be able to arrange for collection of a paper work pack.

Please refer to the letter I sent at the start of lockdown for full details of how to access TEAMS and for further safeguarding and remote learning information.

This letter can be found here: <https://www.dixonsua.com/uploads/files/News/Letters/Final-Remote-Learning-Letter-Jan-2021.pdf>

You can also access TEAMS via a PlayStation or Xbox, using the internet browser on the device. Students will need to use a controller to type on to the screen or use a Bluetooth keyboard.

Please be mindful that remote learning will not always be a 'live' lesson. There will sometimes be assignments and work set for students, or a video or online activity to complete.

DFE Laptops

We have been given a further allocation of laptops from the DFE and will be placing an order soon. Mr Grayson will be in touch with families and we will prioritise families with limited access to devices. I will include further details in my letter to you all after half term.

Year 11 Exams

I realise that this is a time of increasing anxiety about how Year 11 grades will be awarded in the summer. Again, I apologise that I cannot give you any further details on this until the consultation and communication from OFQUAL and the government / DFE.

It is still vital that all Year 11 students continue to engage with their remote learning and work as hard as possible to ensure they are prepared for any teacher assessments or external assessments that may be used to arrive at their final grades.

Ms Downing has also been sending a weekly email to all Year 11s. Please could you encourage your child to read this as it contains important information and support. Thank you in advance.



Year 8 Options

I have currently suspended the options process in Year 8 until we can establish the best way forward for our students. As I am sure you will appreciate, all our students have missed almost 9 months of schooling and I feel that this lost time has impacted on Year 8 and their opportunity to experience a range of subjects across our curriculum. I do not want them to narrow their choice of subjects too early, or without having the opportunity to experience all subjects and ensure they are making the choices that are right for them. In my next letter, I will outline the plans for the options process and give you more information about how we intend to take the curriculum forward.

Contact Information

If you have recently changed your email or phone number(s), please could you email info@dixonsua.com or contact reception to provide your new details. This ensures that we have up to date information to be able to contact you – this is vitally important during this time.

Free School Meals over half term

We have decided to provide Morrison's vouchers to all our families who are entitled to Free School Meals to cover half term. Those of you who are entitled will receive £15 per child for the period covering the half term holiday – until Friday 19 February. The vouchers are being posted as you read this letter and should arrive early next week.

We will then continue with the government scheme from Monday 22 February until such time as children return to school. These vouchers are emailed, or you will have been contacted to collect them. If you are eligible for FSM but have yet to receive any communication from us, please email fsm@dixonsua.com.

If you are not entitled to FSM but are struggling to feed your family, please contact the academy directly and we will support you as much as we can.

Cycle 2 Data and Planning Day

We will still be going ahead with our staff data and planning day on Friday 12 March 2021. We see this as an important day for staff to undertake intervention planning that will aim to plug some of the gaps in learning that have emerged over the lockdown period. School will be closed to all students on this date – even if we are still in some form of lockdown.

End of the school year / 2021-22 Calendar

We are currently scheduled to close the academy on Tuesday 20 July. Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 July will be staff data and planning days. **This means that students' last day of school for 2020-21 will currently be Friday 16 July 2021.** I am very aware that we may have to change this in light of future government plans to potentially extend the summer term. As soon as I know more on this, I will write to you and inform you of our plans. In the meantime, please go to the calendar section of our website for term dates.

I started to plan our 2021-22 calendar recently; however, I have also put this on hold until I can confirm the government's future plans. As soon as I can, I will complete next year's calendar and communicate this to you. I apologise that this leaves things uncertain and will impact on your future planning for childcare and working arrangements; however, I believe this to be the best approach to ensure that I am not publishing a calendar that is irrelevant or incorrect in a matter of days or weeks.

Parents' Evenings

I am also very conscious that the pandemic has meant we cannot hold parents' evenings in person. However, we are keen to ensure that you can speak to their teachers and are updated on the progress of your child. To facilitate this, we are looking to use our online booking system for you to be able to book appointments to meet over Microsoft TEAMS. We have been successfully using TEAMS to deliver lesson content and we feel that we could use this platform to undertake parental consultation meetings. A separate letter will be sent to families to explain this process and give the dates for each year group.

In-school provision

We continue to provide in-school places for any child who is deemed to be vulnerable, or whose parent is a critical worker. If you feel that you qualify for this provision and would like your child to attend, please contact the academy and we will arrange this for you.



Key Dates

Monday 22 February - Return from half term (Vulnerable / Critical Worker Provision only)

Monday 8 March – Government proposed date for students to return (TBC)

Friday 12 March – Staff Data and Planning Day (school closed to all students)

Thursday 1 April – School closes for the Easter Holidays

Friday 2 April – Bank Holiday (school closed to all staff and students)

Monday 19 April – Return from Easter Holidays

Support and Contacting School

The most efficient form of contact from us is likely to be text message and through messages on our website; however, please also be aware that you may receive calls from academy staff on 'no caller ID' numbers and, if you need to speak to someone, you can call reception on 0113 2630110. You can also email the year team for support. Please use the following emails to communicate with our teams at any time:

Our reception will be open next week between the hours of 10am and 2.30pm.

Family Support – please go to our website: link [Family Support | Dixons Unity Academy \(dixonsua.com\)](https://www.dixonsua.com)

For general enquiries and issues with logging on: info@dixonsua.com / call reception on 0113 2630110

Issues with lessons / remote learning: Please email the class teacher

To escalate an issue with remote learning: Ms Hamilton / Ms Watson: shamilton@dixonsua.com / jwatson@dixonsua.com

Child Protection / Safeguarding: Ms Boyd / Ms Rothenburg – safeguardingteam@dixonsua.com

COVID-related concerns: info@dixonsua.com

Serious concerns: Mr Carr – dcarr@dixonsua.com

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I appreciate that I am not able to share more information at the moment and I am sure that, like me, you are incredibly frustrated by this. However, please rest assured that we will do everything we can to ensure that we have a successful return to school for all our students – whenever and however this happens. I thank you for your patience and for your support at this difficult time and as always wish you all good health and happiness.

Yours,



Danny Carr
Principal

