

10th January 2021

Dear pupils, parents and carers,

Just a quick update from me this evening, with my apologies for interrupting your Sunday.

Remote Learning

We are absolutely delighted with the way pupils have responded to the online lesson offer that the curriculum staff at KLA have worked so hard to provide. The numbers of pupils who have successfully attended lessons via MS Teams in the first week of closure, including those who have been attending onsite as either vulnerable pupils or those from critical worker families, are listed below. These numbers are hugely impressive, and I am very grateful to pupils for their engagement and to parents for their hard work to make things function and in overcoming any early difficulties.

- Year 7 167/180 – 93%
- Year 8 182/200 – 91%
- Year 9 160/184 – 87%
- Year 10 146/168 – 87%
- Year 11 145/160 – 91%

Total 800/892 – 90%

From tomorrow, pastoral staff at KLA will begin contacting those parents whose children have not been able to / not tried to log-in to lessons, to try to offer any support we can for those families. If the issue is a technological barrier, then we can offer those pupils the opportunity to attend lessons onsite under the most recent government guidelines, to ensure that they do not miss out on critical days of education. Unfortunately we do not have any laptops left from the number we received from the government. We hope to see more arrive at some point, although we have no control over when.

We have uncovered a slight technical issue with our MS Teams set-up, which has been explained to me (to my very limited understanding) to be something to do with how Office365 was set up at KLA in the distant past. We will be working on this tomorrow to try to fix it, and therefore there may be some disruption to the live lessons as the tech team try to solve it. I am assured that this should be rectified by Wednesday at the latest, and in the meantime, work will be available on Go4Schools should your child experience any interruption to normal lessons. If there are any such interruptions, I would ask that parents refrain from contacting us about them for the next two days and to please bear with us while we try to fix this glitch.

Like all organisations, it is likely that we are going to experience some staff shortages in the coming weeks as a result of the prevalence of coronavirus infections. Where staff are ill, for any reason, clearly it would be unreasonable to expect them to deliver live lessons, and in this case a message will be delivered via MS Teams, directing them to online work that will be set instead. I trust that all parents will understand and support this approach.

We continue to experience a steady stream of requests for help with logons, usernames, passwords and other technical issues, which the team will continue to be available to help with this week again. As usual, if you require their assistance, please simply email data@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk and they will get to you as fast as they can – please do allow them some time to do this, as the volume of such requests is high every day.

Finally, I just wanted to confirm that for the duration of the closure we will not be setting any homework – as clearly all work at the moment is ‘homework’, there seems to be little sense in adding burden and pressure to either pupils or staff at this time.

Vulnerable Pupils and those from critical worker families

We have identified those pupils we feel should be considered as vulnerable to the effects of school closure, and an additional group of approximately 40 pupils whose parents have self-identified as critical workers. We are currently therefore accommodating a good number of pupils in school each day. I am sure parents have been reading in the media about the higher demand being placed upon schools across the country this time round, and I am extremely grateful to our parents for their very reasonable approach to this offer, and who are only sending their children if absolutely necessary.

There is one change I am proposing to make to these ‘bubbles’ attending KLA from this week; Having reviewed the risk assessment again, I am re-introducing the request that we made last time that pupils need not attend in school uniform. It simply seems now to make more sense to ask pupils to come in different clothes each day as we did last time to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission. I hope this does not inconvenience anybody. This rule will equally apply to staff on-site too from this week.

Free School Meals

The government has now announced that they are going to reboot the national FSM voucher system that they created during the last school closure, and we are awaiting confirmation from them as to how this will work. As soon as this is available we will try to get FSM vouchers for KLA pupils on-stream as fast as we can. In the meantime, we continue to provide packed lunches each day for collection from site until that system is in place. I will provide more information on this as soon as we have it.

Learners studying vocational courses at the College of West Anglia

The team at CWA have asked me to let all parents of their learners know that they expect to provide online learning on MS Teams for those Year 10 and Year 11 pupils attending college courses from this week. Pupils should log into these lessons at the same time that they would usually be attending college, using the protocols that they should have been given by CWA. If there are any queries about this please direct them to Paul Champion at the college itself, as we will not be able to answer them.

I hope this update provides useful information to parents. As always, if I have forgotten anything you want to know, please just email me on alan.fletcher@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk.

Finally, thank you so much on behalf of all the team here at KLA for the lovely messages of thanks and support we have been privileged to receive this week. We do try to acknowledge each one, but that may be tricky to achieve in the present circumstances. Please know that they mean a massive amount to all of us, and that they do help us to find energy during what are difficult times for all of us.

Best wishes to all in the KLA community.

Alan Fletcher