

KLA Bulletin

Wednesday, October 14th 2020

Dear pupils, parents, carers and families,

I hope everyone is safe and well in your households and families as we head into what will be, in all probability, a challenging winter period? I am pleased to once again be able to report that 'so far, so good' is the best way I can sum up our return to school so far – our 'bubbles' seem to be working, attendance remains high and staff and pupils remain overwhelmingly healthy. Teaching is being undertaken successfully, and pupils' engagement and confidence levels are great. My sincere thanks as always to all parents for their support and understanding.

Although we have yet to see a case here at KLA, I remain of the opinion that the law of averages means that it is only a matter of time unfortunately before we do – as of yesterday almost a quarter of all secondary schools in England had reported positive cases, with most losing year groups for 2 weeks as a result. With this in mind, we have been trialling whole class teaching via Teams with selected classes, as part of our determination to make sure if this happens, we can continue to deliver full lessons to all our pupils remotely. These practice runs have gone well so far, and we are continuing to hold these trials so that we can refine our practice and make it work as well as we possibly can, ready for when we need it. To help us make this go even more smoothly, it would be really helpful if you could encourage your children to download the Microsoft Teams app onto their phones ready for this, and to check that they have working headsets for their phones' audio.

In our trials, we have been working with pupils using the Teams app on their mobile phones – which has worked well, but in an ideal world they would be able to access lessons via a larger screen. We have recently had confirmation from the Department for Education that we are entitled to bid for a number of laptop computers for any pupil who does not have access to one at their home. If this applies to your child, please can you email the school on data@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk, including their name, year group and your address, so that we can work out the best homes for these to go to. Of course, I cannot guarantee that we will get enough from the government, nor can I guarantee that your child will be successful, but for the moment I am trying to achieve a sense of how many we should bid for in the first place. The deadline for requests will be next Friday, 22nd October, and if we are allocated any they would be scheduled to arrive once the trigger point for a limited school closure has been hit – I must confess the guidance is more than little hazy about when that actually would be!

I know that parents of pupils in Year 11 will have seen the announcement this week that, the DfE has come up with the helpful measure of changing nothing of the content and moving exams back by three weeks! I will write separately to all parents of Year 11 pupils before half-term to share our plans for assessment and exams for the rest of this year, as we work as hard as we can to make sure that our wonderful Year 11 students are not impacted by the effects of coronavirus on their final year of secondary education.

Finally, I have been bugging local public health authorities for the past few weeks about the thoroughly unsatisfactory situation caused by their guidance that all windows in classrooms must remain open at all times, irrespective of the weather conditions! Clearly, I have not been alone, as the email I received last night from the Local Authority's Health and Safety Team reveals:

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'Ventilation

With the Autumn upon us and the weather taking a turn for the worse we are receiving a number of enquiries regarding the impact on thermal comfort from having windows open to increase ventilation. During the warmer weather we were all used to being able to keep windows open all day. Whilst maximising ventilation is important this does need to be balanced with thermal comfort. Our compliance code now qualifies the need for ventilation by saying windows should be opened 'where possible and safe to do so' and the government guidance also says 'wherever possible'. This means taking all risks into account. Below are some examples as to how you can approach this during the more inclement weather:

- *Fully open windows before classrooms are occupied and during breaks but keep them only partially open during lessons*
- *Fully opening some windows to gain air changes but selecting those that are not directly next to pupil's desks/work areas'*

As a result of this change, we can therefore now close windows to a greater extent during wet and cold weather. We are still ensuring however that the following mitigations are in place...

1. At the end of each lesson, the windows are opened for a few minutes to allow new air into the room, and to allow for the dispersal of 'stagnant air' within the teaching room
2. Keeping one small window open at each end of the room throughout the day wherever possible. The heating system is working full-on to make up heat from any lost through this, so the impact on the room should be minimal, whilst maintaining our compliance with the rules
3. If a teacher feels that their judgement is that a room is too cold, they will employ common-sense and allow the pupils in that room in individual cases to put a coat on for short time.

This does mean that we can return to our normal uniform expectations for the vast majority of the time, which is a real relief for me! We are also checking the temperature in rooms throughout the working day – today all rooms are very comfortable in a range between 19 and 24 degrees Celsius.

I hope you will welcome this sensible revision to the guidance, as I do. If you have any concerns or queries please do ask me.

Best wishes,

Alan Fletcher