



# WALTON HIGH

*Leading Learning*

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Executive Principal: Michelle Currie  
Principal: Sharon Alexander  
27 March 2020

Chair of Governors: Renu Elston  
Business Manager: Sukh Singh

Dear Parents

## **Covid-19: Update 9**

At the end of the first full week of all students working from home, most of the challenges that have arisen have been successfully addressed and we are hopeful that next week will run without further glitches. One change we are making is that students will no longer communicate with staff via Skype for Business. They should use Microsoft Teams and Firefly.

### **Digital divide**

Work is being set via Firefly for students with access to broadband and a PC/tablet but those without have had work delivered to their homes. However, the need for students to work from home without access to the ILA has revealed the digital divide that exists in society and the extent to which those without internet access may be disadvantaged. Although we carried out a survey of all students before the enforced closure to ascertain the number of students who did not have access at home to broadband and/or a PC, not all students provided their Tutor with accurate information. Throughout the week the number requiring work to be sent home has increased. As a school, we will be looking at ways of addressing this digital divide both in the short and long term to ensure that no student at Walton High is disadvantaged now or in the future.

### **Use of [feedback@mket.org.uk](mailto:feedback@mket.org.uk)**

Parents are reminded that parents should communicate with the school via [feedback@](mailto:feedback@mket.org.uk) and not use their child's Firefly account to contact a teacher. This is to ensure we are able to manage teachers' workload and ensure any parent who contacts the school receives feedback from the most appropriate person. Following the correct protocol is even more important with teachers working remotely and we thank parents for their understanding and co-operation.

As mentioned in an earlier letter, we welcome constructive feedback as teachers learn new skills and develop their online teaching. Students are also adjusting to a new way of working and so will also take time to adapt. Teachers are sensitive to this and we encourage parents to also support their child if they become overly anxious about their work. It is quality not quantity that counts.

### **IT challenges at home**

We recognise that many families are having to share devices at home. One of the advantages of distance learning is that people can complete the work at different times. To also help with this, not all the learning activities set by teachers have to be completed online.

Parents have also reported issues with their home internet speed. Ofcom has published some useful advice on how to manage and improve connectivity.<sup>1</sup>

MKET's Technical Services Team are continuing to investigate the possibility of providing remote support for some IT problems students appear to be encountering and we will update parents when more information is available.

### **Easter holiday arrangements**

Walton High will continue to provide childcare for the children of critical workers throughout the Easter break. This will be supervised by me and Ms Alexander. To ensure we both also have a break, we are staggering our leave. I will be on away from 30 March – 10 April whilst Ms Alexander will be on leave from 13 – 24 April.

Teachers will have their leave between 6 – 17 April. During this time, teachers will not be setting students work or responding to emails etc. Lessons will begin again on 20 April.

### **Stay at home and help save lives**

This week we were sad to learn that one of our students has lost their grandmother after she contracted COVID-19. Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with the family at this difficult time and we will be providing whatever support may be necessary.

As a responsible employer, MKET is following the Government's guidance, with only duty rota staff on site and everyone else working remotely from home.

Local shops have raised a concern that families are going shopping for essential items together, whereas the guidance states that this should be limited to just one person. Every additional person who is unnecessarily out and about increases the risk of the virus' transmission.

We urge everyone to have consideration for the wellbeing of others, and support those working in the NHS, by abiding by the "stay at home" rule. As one of seven children who grew up in an overcrowded council house in London, I appreciate that this may be challenging but it will save lives.

Stay in, keep your distance, wash your hands and look after each other.

Best wishes



Michelle Currie  
Executive Principal

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/stay-connected>