

LGS Newsletter

8 May 2020



Dear Parents

Welcome to the 7th school closure period weekly newsletter.

Last week I referred to the growing speculation about the reopening of schools. As I write this we are looking ahead to the Government's announcement at the weekend following the latest review of the lockdown. Whilst the speculation continues, it is important to manage our expectations of what might happen. We will not be returning to normal yet, and that has been made clear by the Scottish and Welsh governments, which have urged against reopening schools too soon. However, the signs are that there may be some modest easing of restrictions generally and perhaps we will be able to see the roadmap which will guide our thinking for the next phase.

Behind the scenes we are discussing different scenarios for reopening of the school and thinking through the various practical issues it would present whenever it happens. Even if a phased return to school was to begin in June, we could not accommodate all students if social distancing requirements are still in force. Clearly there will be a need to continue home learning in the second half of term, with a combination of in-school and home learning a possibility for some or all students. We will therefore continue to develop our thinking about what makes for effective home learning and how we are able to support this while remaining mindful of the varying circumstances of both students and staff. As soon as we have definite news and plans to share with you, we will do so.

Thank you to those parents and students who returned our survey last week - this was a randomly chosen sample of both students and parents across a range of year groups. The outcomes and our response to the findings - which were broadly very positive - can be found later in this newsletter.

Also in this edition you will find some snippets from staff about what some of the students have been up to this week, and our latest challenge from the PE department where we have taken on a rival Berkshire school for a physical challenge test series. I do hope you will be able to support this by encouraging your son or daughter to participate - or even by doing so yourself.

Tomorrow, Friday 8th May is a bank holiday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day. As I said last week, there will be no formal school activities that day - but there is an opportunity for students to learn about an important period of history. At the very least I hope you and your families are able to enjoy the promised warmth and sunshine.

Thank you once again for your support.

Mr J Constable - Headteacher

Reminder - critical worker provision

The Government's instruction is to stay at home if possible. However, schools are able to offer supervision for children of workers who are critical to the fight against COVID-19 coronavirus and who are unable to arrange appropriate childcare.

If you think your son or daughter will need supervision in school at any stage during the next few weeks, please contact us on school@lgs.slough.sch.uk.

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Please visit our website at

www.lgs.slough.sch.uk

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General updates

How to get in touch with us

Throughout the school closure period, please contact us via email.

The school@lgs.slough.sch.uk email address is monitored continually and your query will be forwarded to the most appropriate member of staff.

Financial difficulties and free school meals

We are aware that the coronavirus pandemic has had a serious economic impact and that some families may have been affected by job loss or reduction of household income. In some circumstances children from families in such situations may be eligible for free school meals. Under the current Government scheme, families with eligible children receive vouchers to the value of £3 per day which can be redeemed in supermarkets.

If you believe your child or children may now be eligible for free school meals you can find out more on our school website at <https://www.lgs.slough.sch.uk/page/?title=Free+School+Meals&pid=97> where you will find a link to the Slough Borough Council application form. If you live in another local authority area, you should check their website and follow the guidance you will find there.

If you are not sure whether you would be eligible, or if you would like to talk to someone in confidence about your situation and the impact on your son/daughter, please email school@lgs.slough.sch.uk and Mrs Dobbs, Assistant Headteacher, will contact you.

ClassCharts - problems logging in?

We have encouraged parents to log in to ClassCharts regularly to see the learning activities that have been set and whether they have been completed. We are aware that some parents are having difficulty accessing the system. If you would like some help with logging in, or with using it to access information about your son/daughter's work, please email us at school@lgs.slough.sch.uk and a member of staff will contact you.

ClassCharts - comments and behaviour points

In normal use, the ClassCharts software allows us to make comments and to award achievement (positive) and behaviour (negative) points at various levels, as well as setting assignments. The system was clearly not designed with school closure and home learning in mind, so we have had to adapt our use of some of the features to enable us to use the system effectively at this time.

So, in response to some questions, we want to clarify that....

- The 'HW submitted' function is our way of keeping a check on whether or not students have done a piece of work or a learning activity. If several pieces of work are indicated on the system by teachers not completed, this triggers an email to the form tutor, phase leader, or senior member of staff; this is an alert to contact the student to find out if they are well, or if they are having problems with the work.
- There are no behaviour points or 'negative comments' associated with work not being completed. Students are not being penalized for work not completed - but we will be concerned and will want to check whether they are well and whether there are any barriers to them engaging.



Parent/student survey

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What did we do?

We recently carried out a representative survey across Years 7-10 and 12 to find out how students were managing with the learning activities. Five students and five parents from each form, selected at random, were asked to complete a short online survey.

What did we ask?

We asked students about:

- How useful they had found the feedback from their teachers
- Whether they felt confident to contact someone at school if they were struggling
- How often they had been contacted by teachers or their form tutor during the closure
- Whether there was anything else they wanted to tell us

We asked parents about:

- Whether their son/daughter was able to get all the work done
- What barriers there might be to learning effectively
- Whether they had been using ClassCharts to monitor work set and completed
- How much contact their son/daughter had received from their teachers/tutor
- Anything else they wanted to tell us

What did we find out?

Inevitably some students had found things more difficult than others, and there was a range of opinions from both students and parents. However, we found overall that:

Students:

- Were generally positive about communication with school, and felt they got good support from teachers
- Felt that the work quantity was about right, although there were some who were struggling on occasions, for example if they were also looking after younger siblings
- Where students reported barriers to learning effectively, the main reasons were competition for computer access at home, internet connectivity problems, and the family responsibilities
- Liked the variety of activities they were given in many subjects and would like more interactivity. However, short deadlines for completion of work caused stress for some.
- Had almost all had good positive contact with teachers and tutors

Parents:

- Liked the newsletter and regular communication from the school
- Mostly felt that the workload was appropriate
- Some wanted more tests and assessments so they could see if their sons/daughters were actually learning, not simply keeping busy.
- Were keen to see more interactivity in the teaching and learning activities.



Coming up...

Parent/student survey follow up

The results of the parent/student survey were discussed by the Senior Leadership Team this week. We have considered the outcomes of the survey and will be addressing the points made as indicated below.

We have asked staff to

- reconsider deadlines set for work so that these fall at sensible times,
- think carefully about the quantity of compulsory 'You must do this' activities so that students are not overwhelmed,
- be very mindful and considerate of the variation in students' home circumstances and the pressures they might be under.

What about video lessons?

Parents will know from our communication last week that we are encouraging staff to experiment with greater interactivity in learning activities. However, our position is still that this is **not** an expectation of staff and that it should be only used where they are confident to do so and where there is a clear indication that it will help make learning more effective. Just because students want 'online lessons' does not mean that they are actually the most effective way of learning at home! Parents with children in Years 7-10 and 12 will have received a copy of our guidance on interactive learning through InTouch earlier this week.

What about giving more assessment?

During the school closure period we are committed to providing students with **feedback** on various pieces of work they do. These are chosen carefully by subject leaders and their teams. The feedback helps students to know what they have done well and what they could do better. These assessment tasks help the subject teams to know what students generally have understood and learnt, and to decide how to plan the next stages of curriculum content delivery and to know what issues they will need to address when school resumes. For most subjects, particularly in the lower years, students will **not** be receiving specific grades for these pieces of work - the focus is on the things they have done well, and how they could improve.

And....a new challenge from the PE team

LGS vs Edgbarrow School 5 Day Physical Challenge virtual test series

Starting on Monday 11 May, we will be competing in the inaugural 5 day virtual test series against Edgbarrow School.

Each day we will be setting a new physical challenge for everyone connected with the LGS community to get involved and see which school can accumulate the highest scores.

Our social media accounts will cover all of the action and we will send out daily emails informing and updating students on our progress. The event is open to everyone, so it would be great to see as many parents pitching in as possible to help lead us to victory!!

Make sure you're following our Twitter (@lgspe) and Instagram (@lgspe1).





What have students been doing this week?

From the Psychology team...

“Year 12 Psychology students have been producing excellent work for the module of Biopsychology. They have been impressing me with their biological knowledge about the central nervous system, the endocrine system and synaptic transmission. This is a particularly challenging module, but year 12 are coping extremely well with the content and knowledge.”

Mrs Morales-Costin

From the English department...

“Students in Year 10 have been drafting speeches in preparation for their GCSE ‘Spoken Language’ module. It’s been fascinating to read their sensitive and evaluative perspectives on a range of self-selected topics - from solitary confinement to the role of examinations in our education system.”

Mrs Bray

From the Computing department...

Congratulations to **Aarshi Shanker in 7S** who has achieved both her Bronze and Silver IDEA awards.

IDEA stands for **Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award**, which is an international programme that helps develop ICT and Computing skills. It is like an IT version of the Duke of Edinburgh. It is endorsed by the Royal family and once the students achieve an award they receive a certificate from Buckingham Palace.

The IDEA award scheme is something we ask all year 7-9 students to take part in, with many achieving the bronze award and only some achieving silver. However, for Aarshi to achieve the Silver award in year 7 whilst at home is a major achievement and definitely something to be celebrated.

If you would like to know more about the IDEA awards, please see <https://idea.org.uk/>

Mrs Ettridge

From the Drama team...

Students have been taking on the task of creatively responding to the ‘5 plays in 5 days’ challenge set by the Shakespeare Schools Festival. We have had some incredibly creative ideas submitted from our students ranging from animated videos and monologue performances to recreations of scenes using toys!

Please take a look on our **Instagram** where these projects are showcased **@lgsdrama_department**.

Year 7 and 8 Drama students have watched the National Theatre’s production of ‘Treasure Island’ and have produced some creative set designs for this. Again, take a look at our Instagram to see some of these!

Mrs Andrijasevic

And from one of our Year 9 tutors....

“As a challenge I asked my form to write a poem to tell me how they felt, rather than just asking them to just check in. I sent them a couple of examples and have received some good and humorous replies; some, long, some short but the main theme is easy to pick up - boredom with lockdown!”

Mr Harper