

12<sup>th</sup> February 2021



HEAD OF SCHOOL: Mr I Bacon

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will have heard plenty in the news over the last week about possible dates for returning to school, strategies for helping children 'catch-up' and changes to plans for holidays and length of the school day. Much of this is media speculation and based on rumour so I'd like to assure you that at Watling we will simply remain focused on giving the highest quality learning opportunities for the students after half term and doing our best to provide them with support and care, albeit remotely. Beyond that we are well under way in planning for welcoming the students back as soon as we can.

What is for certain is that the EARLIEST date that students will return to school is Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, but I suspect that the government response will involve a staggered return to school, most likely with Primary pupils first so it may be nearer Easter before secondary schools are fully open. I shall be looking carefully at any announcements and guidance from the DfE over half term and will be exploring any way in which we can fully re-open as soon as possible, particularly given our context as a school with only one year group.

**No 'Live-lessons' week (22<sup>nd</sup> February - 26<sup>th</sup> February)**

The feedback from the Remote Learning survey told us that the rigid timetable of live lessons throughout the day was quite exhausting for some students and their families and that an opportunity to be a little more flexible with timings would be good.

With this in mind we have decided to run the first week back after half term (w/b 22<sup>nd</sup> February) with no 'live lessons'.

For each subject/set of lessons throughout the week there will be a recorded presentation by the teacher available alongside work set for the remainder of the time. This will mean that there is no need to stick rigidly to the times of the Watling day and will give students and families the flexibility to manage sharing of devices or work round parents working schedules. I hope you will find this helpful, although I know that for some it will be easier to stick to the normal times to provide a structure for the week. During this week students should complete the tasks set for the subjects that they would have in a Week A of their school timetable.

The recorded presentations and tasks for the week can be accessed via Teams and your child's class in the normal way.

**Respect / Responsibility / Kindness**



WATLING ACADEMY C/O FAIRFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, APOLLO AVENUE, FAIRFIELDS, MILTON KEYNES, MK11 4BA

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During this time, the teaching team will be working on curriculum development that will take into account the differences in teaching and learning and delivery of the curriculum remotely and allow us to make adjustments to help students on their return to school.

This is a crucial task to ensure that what we teach when the students return allows us to build on their learning from January and February and plan for addressing any gaps that have arisen as a result of learning remotely.

To allow them to focus on this curriculum review and planning, teachers will not be available on email during Monday to Wednesday but will be available on either Thursday or Friday throughout the whole day to answer questions or arrange a 'live meeting' to help with any aspects of the work.

The teachers will be available all day as follows:-

<b>Thursday: 8:45am-12:45pm and 1:45-3:15pm</b>	<b>Friday: 8:45am-12:45pm and 1:45-3:15pm</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms Piper</li> <li>• Mr Cassidy</li> <li>• Mr Scott</li> <li>• Mr Williams</li> <li>• Miss Hunt</li> <li>• Mr Gibbs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs Wall</li> <li>• Mr Bartlam</li> <li>• Mr Houghton</li> <li>• Miss O'Rourke</li> <li>• Miss Bell</li> <li>• Mrs Barford</li> </ul>

You will also receive a telephone call during the week from a member of staff to check how the learning is going and to help with any issues you might be finding with organising or accessing the work. There will be no registration sessions during that week.

The 'Remote Learning' programme and 'Live lessons' will return to normal the following week – w/b Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March, including daily registration at 8:45am.

### **Parents Evening**

We do intend to continue with a Spring term Parents Evening as calendared but the dates for the evening will be subject to change depending on when we return to school. The original dates and new dates are as follows but will be dependent on when we return to school.

Original Date	New Date
Weds 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Weds 17 <sup>th</sup> March
Weds 17 <sup>th</sup> March	Weds 24 <sup>th</sup> March

The evenings will be available to book using the booking system we used in December, more details will be sent out nearer the time.

### **NiftyLift STEAM poster competition**

With our focus on STEM, Watling Academy is pleased to have formed a productive partnership with NiftyLift, a worldwide company that began its roots and is based in Milton Keynes. I have attached a flyer from NiftyLift giving our students the opportunity to design a poster representing what STEAM

(Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) means to them. This will be a precursor to some interactive activities we are organising with NiftyLift for March.

Entry details can be found on the form and entries should be sent directly to NiftyLift although it would be nice for the students to share any entries with us here at Watling Academy so we can display them in our new build.

### **PTA and Walking Challenge**

Just a reminder about the challenge Mrs Barford set last week – to walk around the globe as part of our drive to improve mental and physical well-being through exercise and being outdoors. The staff have now set up a team and their first challenge is to climb Everest!!

I have attached the flyer alongside this letter so if you mislaid last week's email then you won't miss out!

### **Snow Pictures**

Following the wintry weather, we have had over the last few weeks I have been sent some great snow photos showing what some of our students and families have been getting up to. I don't know if we have more snow on the way or whether that's it for this year but either way it looks like Watling students have been making the most of being outside...



### **A massive thank you**

This has been a very difficult half term for everyone – students, families, and teachers. I am grateful to all members of the Watling community, each with different challenges and circumstances, for the way you have engaged with the learning opportunities we have provided. Things have not been perfect and there are always areas we can improve upon, I recognise that, and hope we have responded positively to feedback where possible. I'd like to wish you a more restful and stress-free half term, away from the screen and look forward to welcoming students back for 'No Live lessons' week on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Stay safe, keep well.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'I Bacon', followed by a long horizontal stroke and a small dot at the end.

Mr I Bacon  
Head of School