



# Bramcote College

A member of The White Hills Park Trust

29<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this finds you well and that online learning is starting to get into a rhythm that works for you. I am writing today to check in with the whole Bramcote College community and to share a few pieces of advice and information, as well as news about this term.

On Wednesday Boris Johnson announced that, while returning all students to school was undoubtedly a priority, the current status of COVID-19 within the country meant that conditions for all students to return to school after February half term were not right yet. At Bramcote College we continue to offer in-school provision for a range of students and children of critical workers and we are desperate to get back up and running with all our students in school, because what we love doing is teaching, inspiring, and guiding your children towards their futures. There is a lot of discussion in the media and in government about staged returns and rotations of year groups, however, none of that is clear yet, so as soon as we have any more information we will be in touch. Earlier this week Gavin Williamson did say that schools and families would receive at least two weeks' notice of any future changes, in order to be fully prepared.

This term we have worked especially hard on the process of rolling out more live and real-time lessons, which is still something we are developing and reviewing. Engagement has been excellent with student logging on daily and submitting their work using Teams and Century, as well as other learning platforms like Seneca. We do appreciate that technology and wifi can create barriers for online learning, so I would urge you to get in touch with the school if you need to borrow a laptop or need advice or support in enhancing internet access; there are a lot of providers who want to help in various way. We would also value your feedback about online learning on a questionnaire that we will be sending out next week. One thing we are aware of are concerns about screen time and we have a few projects in development aimed at giving students some activities away from online school to give them some variety.

I think it is important to say that, while I know the staff at Bramcote are working hard and the students are also putting their all into online learning, I do also appreciate that being a parent during school lockdown is extremely hard. There is a very difficult balance to strike between being your child's parent and taking on the role of their teacher encouraging them to focus on online work and that this period of lockdown is putting tremendous pressure on families. We have been able to help with breakfast packs and stationery supplies and sanitary products and not forgetting lending out over 80 laptops, but I would also like to offer my support by saying that when online learning feels too hard for you or your child, please stop and have a break. The mental wellbeing of our students and the harmony of their home and family is so important, which is why 'be well' is at the heart of our school motto 'Work hard, be well, do well', so if taking a break from online learning to go for a walk or cook something together, or just have a chat is what you and your child need, then you must do it. This will be especially highlighted next week as it is Children's Mental Health Week, set around the theme of 'Express Yourself', focussing on creative self-expression to help children to cope with the pressures of lockdown and online learning. Our creative subjects will be taking over our social media and suggesting a daily activity to encourage students to express themselves. The week's student newsletter from Miss Cooper will also feature this and our school SENCo Mary Kirby has also put together an advice leaflet which is attached to this letter suggesting how to develop good home learning habits, and I am delighted to see that part of her excellent advice is to personalise what you are doing and to think about what your child can do well and comfortably.

As you are probably aware, your child is currently using Century for some of their Maths, English and Science work, however, if you too would like to brush up your functional Maths or English skills, which could help in the world of work, or it could just help you to understand some more of the work your child is doing, Century are now offering online learning for parents which is free for Bramcote parents because we are a Century school. If you are interested, please follow this link:

<https://www.century.tech/careertech/#careertech-study-with-century>

Earlier this month we ran our best attended Parents Forum yet, during which we discussed a range of topics including plans for online learning and in school provision, as well as progress on the new building project and how we are implementing the new RSE curriculum. We had planned on running the next Parents' Forum on Thursday February 4<sup>th</sup>, however, in light of Wednesday's announcements, we are postponing this to Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February to allow time for the Government to add more detail to their plans for schools so we will be able to discuss them at our next Forum meeting. If you would like to attend the rescheduled Parents Forum, or have any questions to raise, please email [parents@bramcote.college](mailto:parents@bramcote.college) to be sent the Zoom link to the meeting.

This term we have also been busy setting up the Lateral Flow Testing the government have asked all schools to implement and have been very lucky to have the expert advice of one of our Year 8 students' parents during the whole process. We have produced a short video to show the process of testing, which is on our website, or you can follow this link: <https://bramcote.college/parents-and-students/covid-19-testing>. We have now done over 300 tests and are offering twice weekly testing for all school staff and weekly tests to any students who are in school provision whose parents have given consent. If you have not yet given consent for your child to be tested but you would like them to be tested in the future please follow this link to complete the consent form: <https://url.bramcote.college/covidtesting>. The government are also adapting the advice being given regarding the testing of students, so we will keep you informed of any updates we receive.

Another area that we have been focussing on is the government's plans for awarding GCSE and A Level grades this summer and how students' work will be assessed. Included with this letter is a breakdown of the key points of the DFE consultation on summer exams. You have until 11:45pm tonight (January 29<sup>th</sup>) to complete the consultation document, if you haven't already done so, and would like to take part. As with so many things at the moment, as soon as we have more information, we will be in touch with Year 11 and 13 parents to outline the plans for summer 2021. We have however, remained mindful of what may come for Year 11 and 13 and have just completed reports for Year 11s, which will be sent out next week and a set of home-mocks with Year 13. While we feel fortunate that Year 11s completed their mocks in December, the successful Year 13 home-mocks model might be rolled out to Year 11, depending on what the government decide over the next few weeks (we will give students and parents/carers plenty of notice for future mocks). We are also planning on running the postponed 'Exam Success' workshops for parents of Key Stage 4 and 5 students shortly after half term in preparation for this and are discussing online revision with Year 11 teachers.

One of our key responsibilities in education at this time is keeping one eye on the future to try to plan for what lies ahead, be it known or unknown. It is with this eye on the future that our Year 9 students have started their GCSE options process; students have had morning presentation / taster sessions for the new subjects they might choose for GCSE, such as Psychology, Business Studies and Photography and Jenny Read has run two online Options evenings this week to explain the process to parents and carers. Mrs Read will be sending the options form to students on Monday and the deadline for returning the forms is Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February. This reminds me that although lockdown has us in a sort of suspended animation, time does move on and it gives me hope that things will change and return to normal and we will soon have our school back together on one site.

Finally, this term has seen us thinking about some key and though provoking events, with Martin Luther King Day on January 18<sup>th</sup> and Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27<sup>th</sup> encouraging us to focus on hope for the future and kindness and compassion. I am especially proud of the work our Photography students did around the Holocaust Memorial Day theme of 'be the light in the darkness' which featured in the Broxtowe service which can be seen if you follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4kFeglUh5o>

At Bramcote College we are proud to be part of our community and very proud of tremendous effort that our staff, students and their parents and carers are putting into this extraordinary time. Together we can get through this.

Warmest regards,

Heidi Gale

Headteacher  
Bramcote College

'Be the light in the darkness'.

