



Chenderit School

A VISUAL ARTS COLLEGE

Headteacher: Jane Cartwright BA (Hons), MA, NPQH

aim high



arts colleges

Our Ref: JMD/JCCLtr/EasterLtrParents 04.2020

April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

This has been an unusual, unprecedented term. The arrival of Coronavirus has presented many challenges but we have remained strong and focused throughout, despite having not had any experience of dealing with such an occurrence previously. We have felt supported by our community, as we have tried to steer our way through the unknown and we have appreciated your kind words, your encouraging messages and your understanding. We share your concern, even your anxiety, but we know that as adults, we need to model the behaviours that will enable our students, your children, to be able to navigate their way through these most testing of times.

In the spring term, 'Fundraising for our future' began well, but it was somewhat overshadowed by global events. Then, on the 24th March, we were notified that building works would not continue at the current time for reasons that we all understand.

We will still be opening our new build in the future, hopefully in preparation for the new school year, and we still hope to be able to purchase new equipment for our students. If you have not yet made a donation, and are able to, we ask you to use Charity Checkout (<https://chenderit.charitycheckout.co.uk/donate>) or Parentpay (www.parentpay.com). If you are able to Gift Aid your donation the campaign will benefit from an extra 25% at no cost to yourselves. At the time of writing, we have raised £1030 and I would like to thank everyone in our community who has contributed to date.

We had also hoped to hear from local businesses and companies interested in corporate sponsorship opportunities, but we understand that there will be a long financial and economic recovery period ahead and that this may not be possible currently. However, if you feel your family, friends, ex-pupils, employer or anyone else may be able to support us during these uncertain times, we would be very happy to hear from you. We still plan to create a commemorative plaque or book of our supporters, including options for major sponsors. Please contact Mrs Bridget Wilkinson on 01295 711567 or via bwilkinson@chenderit.net if you are able to help.

Examinations

At this time of year, we share comments about the forthcoming public exams. We now know that this summer's exams will not take place. We await details of how grades will be determined, but it is clear that the whole education system is working hard to ensure students are not unfairly disadvantaged.

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We have previously shared with you the advice we have had from the government:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

This remains the most detailed explanation of the process. We will update you as soon as more information becomes available.

Normally we run end-of-year exams in school in the summer term. We do not know how long the period of school closure will last. As more information becomes available, we will devise suitable ways of carrying out online assessment remotely, through testing or other exams carried out at home. Staff are already doing so for those areas of the curriculum currently being studied.

The current period of shutdown is having a significant impact on teachers, who are having to learn how to be distance educators, and parents who are having to motivate and manage home-learning. Staff are having to write materials to present information that would normally be shared in a lesson, through discussion, demonstration and practical activities. They are experimenting with new ways of working, but obviously have to do that without colleagues to carry out face-to-face training. We are learning by doing.

Staff are regularly setting work on Show My Homework, and I gather many students are working very hard. It is hard, working in this way, to differentiate tasks, and vary them for students of different abilities. I have asked colleagues to think about this when setting tasks, but inevitably this is much harder than it is in the normal classroom.

If your child is struggling with a particular task, or has completed enough work for the day, please feel empowered to make a sensible decision about when to stop. Teachers are keen to ensure there is plenty of work to do, but cannot always tell how long it will take students: in the normal classroom it is possible to see progress and make adjustments to the pace of work.

I have asked staff to assess work in line with our school policy and provide feedback as part of a three-weekly cycle. In some cases, it can be more frequent, but we must be realistic. On most days, many teachers will teach up to 150 students, and are not in a position to send an email or comment to all of them.

If there are particular problems, students can contact the member of staff for help and advice.

Developing our curriculum this year

The following comments about preparing to “know more and remember more” were prepared before the school’s closure was announced, but I am sharing them because the principles are important, and will underpin the work we do next term.

As a school, we have been looking closely at our curriculum this year. Current educational thinking is that careful planning of teaching is vital so that students build up their knowledge in a coherent and logical way. All our subject teams, and our pastoral teams, have been looking carefully at their plans, and are in the process of revising them to ensure they are as effective as possible.

We use different forms of assessment to support our teaching. During lessons, we use verbal question and answers, and a variety of written tests and task. We also carry out more formal assessments, with extended questions and answers. To get the most benefit from these all students should regularly revise and check their learning. Of course, when asked to revise, they should do this as thoroughly as possible; by doing so, they will learn more through doing the tests. Parents can help support the process by asking questions, and looking at any self-testing activities their children have done.

The three elements of teaching, learning and assessment work together at every stage of our education. Teachers constantly assess what students know, what they understand and can do. They ask questions in a class discussion, set quizzes and a range of assessment activities, appropriate to the subject being studied. This allows teachers to assess what has been understood, and has been part of our short-term memory.

Recently, many educational thinkers have focused on the importance of students building up a secure knowledge base, and being able to recall and use information sometime after it has first been studied. Teachers are always looking at ways of ensuring that ideas, vocabulary and information become part of students' long-term memory. Regular testing plays an important part in this process and parents can support this by testing their children on what they have been revising at home.

End-of-year tests challenge students to revisit, revise and renew what they have learned over the year. They also provide students with vital practice for external exams: how to concentrate for prolonged periods, how to tackle difficult questions or cope with the unexpected, how to recall and apply information. They can help build resilience. Recent research has shown that learning something, moving on to something else and returning to it is very helpful for the growth of secure knowledge.

Formal testing helps teachers assess what has been learned over the year. The results of formal assessments inform teachers about each individual's learning and help us identify gaps in learning and plan for future teaching. They help us spot students who need extra support or who need to work harder.

For these reasons, and many others, we hope students will apply themselves sensibly to their work from home, and to revision (no matter what form the assessment takes!), practising how to revise, how to organise their notes and their time, how to build specific skills. Too many students believe they can get it right when they face the real thing, without any preparation, but by then it is too late! Please continue to support us by conveying these messages to your children.

We recognise that this extended period of school closure may be a particularly stressful time for some students and families. To help, please consider the following:

- Build in time to include exercise, reading, cooking, creative activities, gardening or simply relaxing, watching films, chatting with each other, your family or close friends online.
- Try not to argue about any of the schoolwork! It is more important that students continue to work however, if this becomes stressful, it is time to focus on something else for a while. Above all, we need to focus on working out how to be so closely confined as a family and how to get on.
- Try to make the most of enjoying the opportunities this enforced grounding is offering us all!

If you have concerns about your child's mental health and well-being during this period, and would like to speak to someone other than your child's tutor or head of learning about this, please contact Mrs Jan Hooper (jhooper@chenderit.northants.sch.uk) or Mrs Allison Smith 01295 711567 ext 218 (asmith@chenderit.northants.sch.uk)

Sixth Form

We have received over 130 applications to join our sixth form from our current Year 11 students and external applicants so far, and we look forward to welcoming them all in September. Whilst

the school closure has prevented us from completing our interview process in the usual way, we have adapted and continued to interview all of our prospective students over the phone so we can get to know each student and help to guide them to achieve their goals post-16. We are excited by the level of interest and enthusiasm shown by all of our new applicants, and we have been very impressed by the preparation and conscientious attitudes that the students have displayed in their interviews. When discussing why our new applicants have made the decision to come to Chenderit Sixth Form, current students have explained how they value our familiar environment, surrounded by teachers and students they already know, whilst also being treated as independent young adults. Current and prospective Chenderit students have mentioned how the friendly and supportive atmosphere is appealing and how they know that we are one of the most successful sixth forms in terms of student progress in this area. If your child has not applied to our sixth form but has decided that they would now like to join us in September 2020, please contact our Head of Sixth Form, Mr Belstone (bbelstone@chenderit.net) or our Deputy Head of Sixth Form, Mrs Rowe (irowe@chenderit.net) to explore this further.

Since the start of the year, we have had 68% of our Year 13 students apply through UCAS to attend university in October 2020, and all students are now receiving their offers back from their university choices. We are incredibly proud of all of our students, as they have had great success in receiving offers from their first choice universities, including places on highly competitive courses such as Medicine and Veterinary Science and offers from Russell Group universities and the University of Oxford. Other students are actively engaged in applying for employment and apprenticeships, or have already had their apprenticeship places confirmed. We also have several students who have organised gap years and plan to return to study at university once they have completed their gap year.

Whilst our Year 13 students have been busy applying for university, it is always a joy to hear from former students, who have already been through the process, this year we have heard from Ellie Claydon and Gregory Richardson, who both left Chenderit after receiving their results last summer. Ellie is in her first year of an apprenticeship in Pharmacy after completing her Health and Social Care and Business Studies qualifications last summer, and Gregory is in his first year of studying Primary Teaching with Early Years and QTS at the University of Chichester, after achieving his French, Media Studies and Health and Social Care qualifications. Both students have conveyed their thanks to the school for the positive impact that the advice and guidance from the Sixth Form team has had on them during and after the application process. We are always pleased to hear from former Chenderit students about how well they were supported in getting to their choice of post-18 destination, and how they have progressed since leaving. If you have positive news to share about our past students, please do let us know.

Our Year 12 students have continued with the fantastic start they have made to their time at Sixth Form. We have been most impressed with their commitment to their own studies and also the wider sixth form experience, including the enrichment, student ambassador and work experience programmes. The skills and knowledge that students have gained from these experiences will be invaluable when they are applying for their post-18 destination, and in life beyond their academic studies. Whilst we are aware that the extent to which students can continue to engage with these programmes in light of current events is limited, we are still keen that students are able to develop their academic and wider, softer skill set whilst the school is partially closed. Please do encourage your child to check Show My Homework regularly for updates from the Sixth Form Team, as these will enable each of our Year 12 students to continue to take part in these important parts of Sixth Form life.

Staffing update

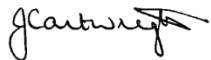
During the summer term, following their maternity leaves, we shall welcome Mrs L Maffey back to the science team and Miss J Saunders back to the humanities teams.

I have enjoyed meeting many of you at various parents' evenings, and our Year 8 options and interview evenings this term; thank you for your on-going support of Chenderit. I feel so privileged to be leading 'Team Chenderit' and I look forward to all that we can continue to achieve together in the future.

Finally, I wish you a very peaceful Easter break and look forward to seeing all of our students again in the not too distant future.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Cartwright', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mrs Jane Cartwright
Headteacher