

Dear parents and carers

THANK YOU

I hope that you are managing well, physically and emotionally, during these unprecedented and testing times. Firstly, can I thank you all for your support and commitment, as we all try our best to make the necessary changes to lifestyle, education and other roles during the current coronavirus outbreak. We are well aware that juggling working from home, furlough, job loss, looking after children, caring remotely for elderly relatives and vulnerable neighbours, sourcing food and necessary supplies, and all of the other challenges which you are faced with, alongside simultaneously supporting your child's education, is an enormous task, and we really appreciate the sacrifices you are making and your huge efforts put into ensuring that your child's learning takes place as effectively as possible during this challenging period.

LEARNING AT HOME

Although the health of the nation must come first, the education of our children is crucial, and we are as determined as you are to ensure that children are not disadvantaged as a result of these extraordinary times and measures, in achieving their potential, learning enough to build a secure foundation for next academic year and beyond, and maintaining a structured day to support their wellbeing. I have written separately to parents of our Year Eleven students with additional information to support them. Although there may have been, and may continue to be, some initial glitches as we move teaching and learning online for a period to the ShowMyHomework platform, the vast majority of work being set, completed and returned is of a high quality and I am grateful to teachers, students and parents for their determination to get this as right as possible in the circumstances. Please do continue to communicate with class teachers as needed where there are any issues, or email or call the college if these cannot be resolved through class teachers, so that we can make the system as effective as possible.

You can find additional support on our website – on the home page, click on 'resources and information during college closure' for resources including our supplementary support brochure to help you effectively access online work being set, which also contains other useful resources and links to support your child's learning and wellbeing. <https://thomasestley.org.uk>

EASTER PERIOD

Over the Easter period, although the school is still open to children of key workers as usual with skeleton staff (we have been educating 7-15 children a day onsite where key worker parents cannot make any alternative arrangements to keep them safely home – these arrangements must be made individually by emailing PAtothePrincipal@thomasestley.org.uk), we are not intending to set new work for students to complete. The time could be used to catch up on work if desired, take a break for their wellbeing, or complete some of the Easter project wellbeing and other challenges which you will find on Show My Homework over this period. Can I encourage you to ensure that there is still some structure within your child's day, including the opportunity to exercise and to take time away from social media and news, as this will support them in the longer term in their health, wellbeing and ability to return to college and learn successfully when we are open again.

SUPPORTING WELLBEING

As I mentioned previously when I emailed you our Coronavirus Pledge, we strongly believe that, in addition to battling against the Coronavirus itself, we also need to battle against the plague of anxiety, fear and isolation currently around us. With that in mind, we have several mechanisms in

place to try to help you to support your child's wellbeing and your own. We have a wellbeing area on ShowMyHomework which signposts useful resources, sets wellbeing challenge and shares ideas for supporting wellbeing as well as a regular student wellbeing blog <https://wellbeingatthomasestley.blogspot.com/> Please encourage your child to take advantage of these and have a look yourself if you have time. Students can also email talk@thomasestley.org.uk if they would like to talk about an issue (there will be a response by the next working day at the latest) and there is remote school nurse contact available – more details regarding this will be on the homepage link on our website.

There are many other useful resources available, including <https://youngminds.org.uk/> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing> which are both particularly useful for both young people and adults during this period, offering advice to parents and carers as well as young people.

REACHING OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Part of our coronavirus pledge is to reach out to our community – as a community college we are committed to this as part of regular practice, and in these extraordinary times, it is even more important.

So far, our keyworker children have sent cards to those in our senior citizens luncheon club to bring some cheer during their isolation, and we have checked that they all have support. Our preschool is sharing ideas with parents with young children to keep them entertained at home and our out of school club has been involved with the rainbow challenge, which we hope to roll out further around the community and involve more children. I have written to our incoming Year Six children and they already have access to a Thomas Estley induction wellbeing blog and Easter challenge competition and will be receiving more support and information soon. Yesterday we raided our Science and ADT departments for goggles and gloves, and these were both dropped off at Glenfield Hospital ITU and collected by a parent who works at Leicester General Hospital yesterday. We will continue to work to support our local community during this crisis as we are able.

There is also support from parish councils and local volunteer groups during the crisis. For those who need some help and assistance during the Coronavirus outbreak and find themselves unable to get out or are self-isolated in Broughton Astley, please ring: **FREEPHONE 0808 5284477** This will put you through to the Volunteer Team who will allocate you an authorised and vetted volunteer who have been endorsed by the Parish Council. For all other enquiries regarding this scheme, please email coordinator@broughton-astley.gov.uk. Other areas have similar support schemes.

NHS/ COMMUNITY APPEAL TO YOU

We have been asked by a parent working at Glenfield Hospital if we can support them further, and I would like to ask your children if they can help. Her message is copied below and any art work or poems can be sent to PAtothePrincipal@thomasestley.org.uk or posted into school, and we will drop them into the hospital. It would be lovely to be able to help the NHS out in this way if we are able to do so, at this difficult time, and I thank you in advance if you are able to send a contribution in to us: *"I am a Senior Sister on ITU at Glenfield hospital, we were incredibly touched by your kind donation of goggles to help us keep safe whilst caring for the poorly patients from our community. Thank you so much for thinking of us at this very difficult time, we really appreciate it. I was personally moved as my son attends your school. **We are trying to get pictures from members of the community to raise staff morale and to let our patients know the community is thinking of them whilst they are away from their families so if any of your pupils would like to share some art work or poems we would love it (please note we have to be able to laminate them).**"*

PREVIOUSLY CALENDARED EVENTS

Educational Visits - Mrs Hartley is overseeing the logistics around school trips and residential. All Big Bang trip refunds have been made to parents. The arts award and Yorkshire Sculpture Park visits have been cancelled. The Paris residential has been successfully transferred to March 2021 at no additional cost and the Ski trip refunds will be processed shortly after the Easter holidays. At the time of writing, the Normandy visit in July has not been officially cancelled. We are following government advice, are in regular communication with companies and insurers and will keep you updated.

Year 8 – Specialisms Option Choices – We have received queries regarding the specialisms options process for next academic year in year Nine. This will still take place and can do, if needed, remotely, as can GCSE options processes and timetabling, and we will be in touch after Easter as necessary regarding these and other plans and processes.

Other events – All onsite events currently in the college calendar while school closures are in place will not take place – once the college reopens, they will be postponed or cancelled, if necessary, with information shared with you at that point. Whilst closed, we will be focussed mainly on the core business of providing remote learning for all our students, hosting onsite provision as a last resort for keyworker and vulnerable children, supporting current Year Eleven students to progress smoothly into post 16 routes, and carrying out other new duties required by us by the government, as well as choosing to pursue an additional Thomas Estley focus on supporting wellbeing in our college community.

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Please find a link to the current guidance published this week for parents and carers which covers some frequently asked questions. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Our thoughts are with you at this difficult time as we work in collaboration to support each other, our young people, and our community. Thank you once again for your support.

Warmest wishes,

Mandi Collins, Principal, and the Thomas Estley family