



THE GRANGE
ACADEMY
LIBERTAS PER CULTUM

12 February 2021

Dear Parent or Carer

I would like to begin by thanking teachers, support staff, children and parents for pulling together in exceptionally difficult circumstances. The effort that everyone has put into the past five weeks has been nothing short of phenomenal and there will, I have no doubt, be lasting gains for teaching and learning from many of the innovations and discoveries we have made.

Thank you also for playing your part and helping to keep our school safe by following current Government guidelines during the national lockdown.

Hertfordshire County Council have asked us to share the attached leaflet with you as a reminder of what we all can and cannot do during the lockdown restrictions. Please do take the time to read it and remind your children that for now, we all have to play our part to protect ourselves, our families and our friends.

We have faced numerous challenges outside of our control, most obviously Covid-19, and, more recently, a boiler failure at the worst possible time of year(!) but we have kept learning going and the school open for the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children.

Parents of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals should already have received a text and an email regarding an electronic supermarket voucher covering half-term. If you are having any difficulties with this please contact Karen James (k.james@thegrange.futureacademies.org).

We will be contacting everyone shortly after half-term, with an update on the exam situation for Years 11 and 13 and (hopefully) some dates for the reopening of school. The main thing is to keep studying and working hard; whatever Gavin Williamson does or does not propose, at all Future Academies pupils in these year groups can still expect a full suite of exams in all of their subjects.

Our online parent evenings have been well attended and I have received very positive feedback after our Year 7 Parents' Evening last week.

Thank you to everyone who completed our parental survey on remote learning and for the many helpful comments that were made.

Several points emerged from your feedback, which we will be addressing after half-term: first, many parents have asked that the school firmly insists on cameras being switched on at all times. We started with all cameras on but over time many pupils have switched to microphones only and typing with cameras off. We will be having a real drive to get cameras back on after half-term and we would appreciate your cooperation in enforcing this. For teachers, being able to see the students' faces is so helpful in gauging understanding and engagement.

Something else that emerged was the feeling that pupils need to be off-screen for some of the day and to have a wider range of activities. We are trying to build this directly into our lesson planning, with more independent, off-screen work being scheduled and we will be having more whole year group talks and assemblies after half-term, from a range of inspiring external speakers. PE lessons will also become more interactive and pupils will be asked to send in evidence of steps walked etc.

Student Mental Health is an ongoing issue. The hardest thing to deal with is the isolation from close friends. We will be working more on this after half-term and in the meantime, may I draw your attention once more to the following resources.

What can you do at home?

- **Find time to talk, just the two of you** – ‘Check in’ with them while you’re doing things together, so they get used to talking about their feelings.
- **Play together** – Play helps them to be curious, learn new things, solve problems and express feelings without words.
- **Be a role-model** – Show how you cope with difficult feelings and look after yourself.

Do you need further help? If so please contact the school through your child's form tutor, Head of Year or Mr Nagle, the safeguarding lead - j.nagle@thegrange.futureacademies.org. We can offer specialist counsellors, 1:1 sessions face to face or virtually, and an alternative to the day to day challenges of being at home.

If you need more specialised help please contact:

- SHOUT - Text **CONNECT** to **85258**
- Childline - 0800 1111
- Samaritans - 116123

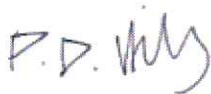
The Year 9 Options booklet is now out and we will be hosting an online event on Wednesday 24 February from 5pm to 6.45pm. There will be a short video on every option to keep parents and students informed of their choices and a live Q&A session. We are particularly excited about the new GCSE offerings in Classical Civilisation and Citizenship (i.e. Politics), so do please take a look at these. Year 9 Parents will have a further opportunity to speak with current subject teachers at the Parents’ Evening the following week on 3 March 2021.

This week is National Apprenticeships Week and we have been encouraging students to sign up to some of the many live and on-demand national events taking place - a good selection can be found on the UCAS website <https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships>. Regardless of whether students know their next steps, or whether they are still figuring out what they would like to do, this is an excellent way of understanding some of the options in more depth.

We will shortly be releasing guidance to our current Year 12s on university choices, the UCAS Personal Statement and how to make best use of the excellent UniFrog resource.

I hope you and our families have a restful, calm and safe half-term.

Yours faithfully



Dr Philip Hills
Principal
The Grange Academy

PLAY YOUR PART

We are still in a national lockdown, please follow the current rules to keep you and your family safe

Even if your child is currently attending school for face to face learning or they are learning remotely from home - the same lockdown rules apply

DO

- ✓ Try to stay at home as much as possible
- ✓ Exercise just with your household, or if alone you can meet just one other person (not household)
- ✓ Remind children they must socially distance when not at home (even if they are currently in a bubble at school)
- ✓ Stay in your local area if you have to go out for essentials
- ✓ Remember 'Hands, Face, Space'

DON'T

- ✗ Mix with people outside of your household or support bubble
- ✗ Allow older children to meet up with more than one friend for exercise (even if they are currently in a bubble at school)
- ✗ Have play dates with friends
- ✗ Have sleepovers
- ✗ Allow children to touch or hug their friends if you do happen to bump into them
- ✗ Take children to the shops unless you really have to

Thank you for playing your part to keep our communities safe

For more information go to
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

