

28th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

This has truly been the most extraordinary week in what are clearly unparalleled times. I would like to begin this letter by thanking you all for the support and patience you have shown as we face the unprecedented challenges of school closure and home education, whilst simultaneously dealing with a public health emergency.

I have particularly reason to be thankful for the way our community has pulled together. As many of you will know, I have been off school for the past fortnight fighting off infection. It has been hard to be incapacitated whilst so much has been happening, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the senior leadership team (and in particular Mr Craig Hewitt for deputising so ably), and all the staff at Highgate Wood School who have coped magnificently in my absence. I am pleased to report that I have recovered well during the course of this week and was able to resume normal work duties yesterday. I would like to thank those of you who sent in positive wishes to me and my family during this time. It means a lot.

Most of the students have now been at home for a full week, almost two for those in Years 8 and 9. I am heartened by the fact that so many have still applied themselves diligently to their studies, completing work set on Show My Homework, engaging in Sam Learning quizzes and other activities set by their teachers. I believe this shows an impressive capacity for self-study as well as demonstrating impressive resilience and fortitude.

Whilst this has happened the school has also supported the children of key workers and vulnerable students (as requested by the government), implemented a voucher system to allow those entitled to Free School Meals to still receive help with lunches, put in place a programme to allow students who do not have ready access to technology to borrow laptops and, most critically, developed internal systems that will allow us to support home learning in a more effective and cohesive way during the weeks ahead.

Having work set on Show My Homework has been an effective short-term solution, and it will continue to have its place in our home learning plans going forward, but on its own it is not enough. I am also aware that some students have found it very difficult to “pace themselves” and have felt overwhelmed by the volume of work that they are facing. This is something we are keen to address.

Highgate Wood School Student Council supports individual action to address the issues of Climate Change and promotes the United Nations top 10 recommendations.



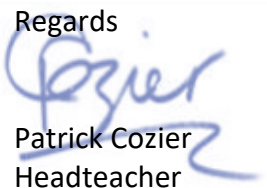
Like many other schools, we have adopted and implemented the G Suite for education. This includes a wide range of tools to support home learning. All students have been given their login details for this, and many have now logged on. Currently we are using it simply to share files, but we are also building some Google Classrooms so students are able to have a more dynamic, interactive learning experience whilst at home.

Over the coming days we will be supporting and training our staff so they are able to make use of these additional tools. We will also be refining our home learning programme to make it easier for students to have a balanced and managed “school day” whilst they are at home – providing greater structure where we can. We will also be looking to explore ways in which staff can share feedback with students on the study that they have completed or with helping them cope with work set.

As we know that this is a challenging time, apart from the academic learning taking place, I will also be discussing with staff how we reach out to each and every one of our students to see how they are coping and to offer our support where we can.

I will be informing all our families much more fully of these plans in the coming week. In the meantime please accept my best wishes for a pleasant and restful weekend.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cozier', is written over a light blue rectangular background. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Patrick Cozier
Headteacher