



SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE SCHOOL

A CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS AGED 11-19

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28th January 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Re: Headteacher's Update

I hope you receive this letter in good health. Whilst life is difficult currently, it is important to remember none of us have ever been through this before. We all have our own coping mechanisms and it is important to remind yourself that you are doing a great job in trying to juggle everything that you face. I hope that the contents of this letter will help families further.

I would like to thank all the parents and carers who responded to the recent survey we conducted. We are keen to maintain an understanding of how our provision is working for the students. We were overwhelmed by the positive feedback from a large number of families. The volume of supportive and positive comments was truly remarkable. I do appreciate that decisions will not always please everyone, but we will continue to make decisions that we feel are in the best interest of the students. As you can imagine, it is quite a juggling act when we have one parent of the opinion that "there are not enough live lessons" and another saying "there are too many live lessons".

There was one response which stated that we are not offering enough lessons, and I wanted to reply directly to this. The DfE have specified a number of hours of remote learning for schools to follow. "Remote learning" does not only mean live lessons. We took the decision to deliver as full a timetable as possible of Live lessons and simply could not fit any more lessons on to the timetable, particularly when we are trying to support all learners. Our students are receiving 26 hours of their 30 hours of learning per week.

Some parents did raise concerns around the number of hours of screen time their child is receiving; this is something we are extremely conscious of. As I said in my letter before Christmas, if you feel your child needs a break from the screen, then please ensure they do. All we ask is that school is informed that this is the case. The purpose of informing the school is so teachers do not pester you about missing a lesson or a piece of work. Please feel free to exercise this right to remove your child for a morning, an afternoon or the day as necessary. You are best placed to judge the effect of screen time. My only advice is that screen fatigue is not helped by coming away from school work to watch TV or spend hours on social media.

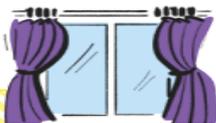


A couple of parents requested that we return to live PE lessons. Unfortunately, this is not feasible. Many families have siblings working at home, and parents or carers working from home; they may be lacking space, some don't have gardens and so on. Having an energetic teenage son, I fully appreciate the need for physical activity. Students do have 3 hours per week of what would have been Core PE lessons and can therefore still exercise in this slot. We would encourage all students to do this; the positive effect of exercise on mental health is widely known. So, whilst the students do not have their Core PE lessons as live lessons, there are a number of ways to maintain physical fitness. This may be through the activities suggested by our own PE department, or perhaps a Joe Wickes workout. There are plenty of apps and videos on You Tube to help, or just getting out for a walk (following national guidance) can do wonders for motivation and mental health.

I will be sharing your comments with all of our staff at STFS; they are not immune to the same struggles, and to receive such fantastic feedback and appreciation from our community will be a huge boost to everyone here. You cannot underestimate the importance of your feedback on the staff, and to have such wonderful comments and cakes arriving at school makes a huge difference.

We had an internet disaster on site on Tuesday, finding ourselves without the internet for the whole day. It forced us in to a world of no screens and the students on site had a great day- making some wonderful art collages, playing sport, having a conversation or reading. The "no-screen" impact was notable and clearly benefitted the students. For this reason and in response to the family survey, the Governing Body and I have taken the decision to have a **screen free day** for all students and all staff. Students and staff have spent prolonged periods of time sitting at a screen and this clearly is affecting motivation and their well-being. Our **screen free day** will take place on **Tuesday 9th February**. On this day, no live lessons or assignments will be set by teachers. Instead, students have a selection of activities to choose from which do not involve a screen. Our hope is that a little respite from a screen will help everyone reset and rebuild the energy to see through the final few days of the half term. We encourage you to join in with your child, should your commitments allow. If the day is successful, we will look to do this more regularly to support everyone's needs. We will change the day each time so that the same subjects are not affected. There are a number of activities that our young people (and older ones) can do:



<p>1 How many different words can you make from the letters in this sentence, below? Grab a pencil and paper and write a list!</p> <p>'Learning from home is fun'</p>	<p>2 Thank a community hero. Think of someone that helps you in some way and write a short letter to thank them.</p> <p>Thanks!</p>	<p>3 Get building! You could build a Lego model, a tower of playing cards or something else!</p> 	<p>4 Can you create your own secret code? You could use letters, numbers, pictures or something else! Can you get someone else to try and crack it?</p>	<p>5 Start a nature diary. Look out of the window each day and keep note of what you see. Birds, flowers, changes in the weather, what else?</p>
<p>6 Hold a photo session. Use a camera or a mobile phone to take some snaps. What will you photograph? Your pets or toys perhaps?</p>	<p>7 Build a reading den. Find somewhere cosy, snuggle up and read your favourite book!</p> 	<p>8 Use an old sock to create a puppet. Can you put on a puppet show for someone?</p> 	<p>9 Make a list of all the electrical items in each room of your home. Can you come up with any ideas to use less electricity?</p>	<p>10 Design and make a homemade board game and play it with your family.</p> 
<p>11 Do something kind for someone. Can you pay them a compliment, make them something or help them with a task?</p> 	<p>12 Can you create a story bag? Find a bag and collect items to go in it that relate to a well known story. If you can't find an item, you could draw a picture to include.</p>	<p>13 List making! Write a list of things that make you happy, things you're grateful for or things you are good at.</p> 	<p>14 Design and make an obstacle course at home or in the garden. How fast can you complete it?</p> 	<p>15 Can you invent something new? Perhaps a gadget or something to help people? Draw a picture or write a description.</p> 
<p>16 Keep moving! Make up a dance routine to your favourite song.</p> 	<p>17 Write a play script. Can you act it out to other people?</p> 	<p>18 Read out loud to someone. Remember to read with expression.</p> 	<p>19 Write a song or rap about your favourite subject.</p> 	<p>20 Get sketching! Find a photograph or picture of a person, place or object and sketch it.</p> 
<p>21 Junk modelling! Collect and recycle materials such as yoghurt pots, toilet rolls and boxes and see what you can create with them.</p> 	<p>22 Draw a map of your local area and highlight interesting landmarks.</p>	<p>23 Write a postcard to your teacher. Can you tell them what you like most about their class?</p> 	<p>24 Draw a view. Look out of your window and draw what you see.</p>	<p>25 Get reading! What would you most like to learn about? Can you find out more about it in books? Can you find a new hobby?</p>

More can be found by clicking the link below.

[Simple and fun non-screen activities that children can do at home | by Anna Whiteley | Pobble | Medium](#)

You are free to come up with your own ideas too: find the activities that work for you and your family. We appreciate that this will probably please as many parents as it will frustrate, but the intensity of screen fatigue that students, staff and families are coping with will have a negative impact if we do not make some allowances once in a while. Life is tough for young people currently, and they deserve a little break.

On Tuesday 9th February we will still continue to offer onsite provision for children we currently accommodate. They will also have a screen free day and we are making preparations for this. However, should you wish to keep your child at home then please make reception aware so we can plan accurately for numbers on site.

The Government announced earlier this week that schools would not be returning until the 8th March at the earliest. There will be no further detail from the Government until 22nd February about what this will actually look like for schools. Like you, we want students back in school as soon and as safely as possible and we wait in anticipation that we can plan for a return soon. I will keep you updated when the national announcement is made.



Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Tell your children that we are really proud of them and their fantastic effort. They, and you, are doing brilliantly!

Best wishes,

Neale Pledger
Headteacher

