



# Icknield Community College

Headteacher: Mr M Hunter, BA (Hons), MSc, NPQH  
Love Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5RB



3 April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you and your families are all well.

I wrote to you last Friday (please see the letter [here](#), if this is helpful) to update you on how you could best support your child at home. I thought it would be helpful if I updated you on what we have learnt over the past week or so from each other, from you, from other schools and from other organisations nationally.

As put out in a joint paper by the National Education Union (NEU), the National Association for Headteachers (NAHT) and the Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL), earlier this week:

“This is not education as we have known it.”

We all believe that students have a fundamental entitlement to education, but, at the moment, this will certainly look different from school to school across the country. At a time such as this, we are very fortunate that Icknield Community College is part of the Acer Trust. The 7 schools in the trust are working closely together to find the best solutions we can for our students and for you as their parents. We were very pleased when we read some guidance published by ASCL in the middle of this week “Leading Learning During Coronavirus School and College Closures”. We believe that we are doing all the right things to give your child the best possible education in the given circumstances.

We are doing our best to communicate with you. Many of you will have already received the first of our fortnightly phone calls home this week, made by members of staff across the school (some of you will, as per previous correspondence, receive these next week). Thank you for the overwhelming support for the self-study sessions we have put in place already. Of course, as ever, as parents, you won't all agree with what we are doing: some of you think we are setting too much work, some of you don't think we are setting enough. Please do know that we are listening to you. Please also trust us, as professionals, and know that we are doing what we think is right for your child. On that note, please can I stress that the numbers of hours for self-study set out in last week's update was a guide. For some children, particularly, perhaps those with Special Education Needs, this number might be too high. For some, who routinely do a normal 5 hour school day and then work for 3 hours each evening, it might not be enough.

You know your children best so please get them to do what you think they will be able to manage. We know you will all be working incredibly hard to do the right thing for your child and we know that this won't be easy. We are aware that it might well be affecting your work and your daily routines. We may just have to stick this one out for the duration!

As per my last letter, we are in the first phase of learning with your children. Revision for the exam period, and the exam period itself, takes us up until Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. At this point, as stressed in the ASCL paper referred to earlier, consolidation of prior learning (or revision) is crucial. Please can I bust a myth believed by some that revision isn't learning! Children do not remember everything they learn first time round. Part of the revision process is about revisiting prior learning and securing it in the longer-term memory. By way of example, a child might be able to recall about 60% of their learning in an exam situation. Following a thorough revision process, they might be able to recall 90%. This is clearly the learning process in action. "Spaced repetition", where children learn or relearn a topic, and then come back to it a few days later, is definitely something we would encourage and advocate.

I hope you all received the revision materials, produced by our Head of Department and other colleagues over the course of this week, sent out by Matt Ford, Assistant Headteacher, this afternoon. I hope these provide your children with even greater clarity around what they should be revising and help them to take their revision to another level.

I am very pleased that, at the beginning of this academic year, we set out our expectations for our students' Attitude to Learning (AtL). We gave students, and you as parents, some [clear criteria](#) for students' AtL in lessons and beyond lessons. Admittedly, at this point, we clearly had no idea how much work students would be required to do beyond lessons! But our principles remain the same. As per the criteria, we would encourage students to "read widely around a subject or topic area to further and deepen their learning". In the ASCL paper, this is referred to as the "curriculum hinterland". Students in history, for example, whilst studying a particular time period for an exam, could broaden their understanding of that period by considering "Meanwhile elsewhere...". Learning about what was happening somewhere else in the world during the same era as the topic they are studying is only ever going to benefit them.

As we have already said, after the exam period, we will be moving into the next phase of learning: "pre-learning". The Leadership Team are spending some considerable time evaluating the best approach and best resources we can use to do this. We do not want to go for the first option we have, but rather the best option for your children. We are discussing this with secondary schools across the Acer Trust too.

On that note, we have decided, as secondary schools in the Trust, that we are not going to be asking our staff to video conference lessons from home. There are a number of potential safeguarding concerns here and we do not want to put our staff, who are mostly working from the privacy of their own homes at the moment, at risk. We are, however, currently exploring other models of collaborative "virtual" learning, so that your children can learn remotely with their peers. As per previous correspondence, we would encourage them to think about learning together via Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Skype, or other similar platforms.

As said earlier in this letter, this is not education as we have known it. As a result of the circumstances we all find ourselves in, we simply cannot assess students in the way we would do if we were in school. Please do your best to ensure that, when the time is right (detailed information will follow), students return their exams to their teachers via their school email. Teachers will mark the work they receive but will not be sending marks and feedback back to students. This will be available for students when they return to school. We have listened to parental concerns raised about home printers and PDF

documents and we will ensure that all exams will be available to children in Microsoft Word so that they can complete them electronically and email them back to their teachers. We are still looking at the possibility of online assessments where appropriate.

But we are needing to do all of this unexpectedly and immediately! I know work will be really challenging for many of you at the moment; the same goes for us too. We are trying to deal with a very difficult situation remotely. We are not able to work in the close-knit teams we are used to working in on a daily basis, but rather work up ideas, materials and strategies through regular conference calls and more distant communication than we would ever want.

As per my previous letter, we also appreciate that, as parents of Year 10 students, you will want some clarity on what school closure will mean for your children taking their GCSEs next year – what will happen as a result of lost teaching time? We, clearly, want the answer to this question too and are currently following national developments incredibly closely. As soon as we get some further clarity on this, we will be in touch with you.

We will remain open over Easter for students of key workers – my thanks to the teaching and support staff who will be in school during this time, including the bank holiday weekend. In addition to this, staff will be working with each other to provide the best for your children after the break. We will write to you at some point with an update here.

On a separate note, we have been busy ensuring that children entitled to free school meals, will get the provision they need after Easter. Parents of children entitled to free school meals will be written to separately next week about plans for Monday 20th April onwards. If your personal situation has changed in recent days or weeks, and you think your child may now be entitled to free school meals, please do get in touch with Gill Ward at [gill.ward@icknield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:gill.ward@icknield.oxon.sch.uk).

To finish, I did just want to say a word to your child(ren)...

Dear Student

I hope you are well. I also hope that you are learning effectively and revising hard so you can do the best you possibly can in your forthcoming exams.

I recognise that this is not an easy situation for you. You may well be missing friends and (some of you!) teachers. You certainly may well be missing the routine the normal school day provides.

We certainly miss you! We are trying our best to give you everything you need to be as successful as possible at home without us. We are also writing to your parents to give as much advice as we can. Please listen to this advice from us, via your parents, and please be generous to your parents too! It is not easy for many of them who have other commitments to support your learning every day over an extended period of time.

I hope you all manage to enjoy the Easter break as much as you can. Please look out for each other, help each other, and stay in touch with each other from a distance.

With best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "M. Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mat Hunter  
**Headteacher**