



PRESDALES SCHOOL

Achievement for all

Headteacher: Mr M Warren

Hoe Lane

Ware, Herts

SG12 9NX

Tel: 01920 462210

Email: admin@presdales.herts.sch.uk

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Dear Parent/Carer/Student

Well done to all Year 11 and 13 students who have completed their January assessments at home over the past two weeks. Staff will mark the assessments and provide feedback for students. We look forward to welcoming Year 11 and 13 back to remote lessons as from Monday.

Inset Day

The planned inset day due on Thursday 28th January has now been moved to **Friday 5th February**. This is to allow staff time to mark papers so that they can be moderated on the 5th. There will not be any lessons taught or provided for Friday 5th February.

A reminder that there is also an inset day on **Monday 22nd February**.

Remote Lessons

We continue to monitor our provision of remote lessons and have made the following adjustments:

- Lessons will be 45 minutes in length to allow for downtime between lessons (double lessons will have a 5-minute break in the middle)
- Cameras: We strongly recommend that cameras are on in lessons. It is challenging teaching a screen of black rectangles. Seeing students enables staff to read body language which helps you to know whether a student is 'getting it' or not. Staff will be giving students time in lessons to complete work when cameras can be turned off. We know that some students do not like having their cameras on, but it is easier to teach if they do
- Remote teaching is not the same as teaching face-to-face and we are unlikely to cover the same amount of content as we would do if we were in school. The focus is on providing high quality, not quantity

Online Learning and Safety

Please could we remind you of the following to support your child in learning online:

- It is a good idea to check backgrounds that are visible whilst students have their cameras on (there is a new functionality on google meets that allows a blank background to be used which can be helpful, instructions for this can be found at <https://presdales.herts.sch.uk/remote-learning/#toggle-id-13>)
- Appropriate dress should always be worn
- Where possible students should be accessing lessons in a family room/area where you can monitor their activity
- High standards of behaviour are expected and monitored by staff
- We do appreciate the students are spending a lot of time on their screens at present and that it is important to encourage students to engage in other activities not involving screens at the end of their school working day

There are many constantly changing challenges in ensuring young people stay safe online since we are all increasingly using online communication. We will be focusing on key online safety reminders with students when we mark Safer Internet Day on 9th February in a few weeks time. On our school website we do have a useful range of resources for parents about online safety, with links to guidance from many organisations on different online issues which we hope is helpful for you (<https://presdales.herts.sch.uk/online-safety/>).

Parents' Evening

It is frustrating that the Year 8 catch up parents' evening last night was disrupted at the provider's end. We have been in contact today and have been assured that Year 9 meetings next week will run smoothly. There were 630 schools using the system yesterday. Remote parents' evenings are new and the companies providing them are learning fast.

Stem Challenge

The first STEM challenge of this lockdown was launched this week for KS3 students. The first task is for students to build a density column (lots of Maths, Science and a little bit of food tech). As before, prizes and rewards are available.

Kilometre House Competition

The Km House competition starts on Monday. Which house can walk/jog/run/cycle the most km's in the next three weeks? The event will run until 12th February and details will be sent to students. Rewards points are also available for students taking part.

Opportunities for accessing books during lockdown

Please see information below regarding ways to encourage students to read during lockdown.

Hertfordshire Libraries Ready Reads Service

Libraries have been deemed to be an essential service by the Government, and whilst we are not allowed to let people enter the building and browse themselves, Ready Reads is a new way to borrow books from selected libraries (including Hertford, Hoddesdon and Ware) during lockdown. Never have books been more important, not only supporting children with their reading and education but also with their health and wellbeing, enabling them to leave behind the daily stresses and escape into imaginary worlds.

We select, you collect! Simply visit <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/other-library-services/ready-reads.aspx> to fill out the form and tell us the types of books, or favourite authors you'd like to receive, and we will make up a pack especially for you.

Books can be ordered for all family members, all on the same form, but each person will need to be a library member to use this service.

We will send you an email to confirm your Ready Reads pack is available for collection from your selected library. Social distancing measures will be in place and packs will need to be collected during our revised opening hours from the library door.

As well as this, our requests service is fully operational so for specific books these can be ordered through our catalogue and picked up in the same way. We also have an extensive online eBook and eAudio library BorrowB

Oak National Academy Virtual School Library – for KS3 students (and those with younger siblings!)

This website, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, highlights a popular children's author each week, providing a free e-book, exclusive videos and their top three recommended reads.

<https://library.thenational.academy/>

General

I am pleased to announce that the school has been successful in bidding for funding towards the refurbishment of our Chemistry labs. We have been awarded £90,000 from the Wolfson Foundation. The total cost of the project is likely to be around £200,000 and we are hoping to complete the work this summer ready for September.

Thank you for your continued support. I wish you all a pleasant weekend.

Keep safe

Matt Warren
Headteacher