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The West Bridgford School

Dear Parents/Carers

As the problems with our IT systems have continued for much longer than anyone expected, I felt it was important to give you a more extended update. I never expected to be returning to pupil-delivered paper letters home!

The system failure

Last Thursday afternoon we experienced a drop in internet connection. This is not that unusual, so initially it did not raise too many alarms. However, when our IT team were still here late into the evening it became clear that the problem was more widespread. An air conditioning unit in the server room had failed. The resulting temperature increase caused physical damage to servers and controllers. Over subsequent days we were able to replace some parts, but each time, any attempts to restart the systems revealed more damage. We are now awaiting further parts to be delivered – and this will be days not hours. We do not currently know how quickly we can restart everything and how long it will take to recover all our data from backups. It could be after Half Term before everything is back to normal.

What doesn't work?	What are we doing instead?
Our online safeguarding platform	Important information can still be shared quickly and confidentially by paper. Safeguarding is our number one priority – we could not stay open if this were compromised in any way
Internet Connection for staff	Using alternative teaching resources. Some staff are able to “hot-spot” with their own devices.
Read/Write software for exam students with access arrangements	Turned the Hall into a flexible space for Learning Centre staff to support each individual exam candidate with access arrangements. Human readers and scribes.
Cashless tills system for lunches	Provided a free lunch for all students on day one. Now recording food purchases on classlists. These will be added to students accounts when we are able.
Internal emails for staff communication	Some staff are able to use their own devices on 4G. We have been meeting in person as a whole staff every morning to exchange information.,
Brightspace	We don't have an alternative way of providing those resources and homework. This is clearly one of the systems which is a top priority. However there are lots of online resources for exam revision materials, including past papers from the exam boards websites
Classcharts	Giving positive and negative feedback verbally. Following up student issues with pastoral teams. Detentions will recommence tomorrow
Mass email system to communicate to parents	Pop up messages on the website – please keep checking. Informal Whatsapp groups to pass urgent messages to Exam students. Paper letter home today.
Photocopying	We have managed to bring limited copying back – hence this letter!
Electronic registration	Old fashioned paper registers in the morning and a brief registration period with tutors after lunch. This meets DfE expectations.

So how can we stay open?

When something like this happens, it really brings home how much we rely on IT systems to make our lives easier. We also realise that we used to manage perfectly without them, and we can do again – as long as it doesn't go on too long!

Teachers can still teach and students can still learn. They may not have access to the full range of resources they normally would, but we adapt.

Yes – computer science lessons are a little different from normal, but even there we still have paper, and lots to talk about!

I haven't yet spoken to any students who are too upset about missing detentions for a week!

Some of our solutions to problems have needed more staff resources – such as readers/scribes for a number of examination students. We have made this possible by changing our plans for Year 11s between exams – allowing those who want to, to study at home, and releasing teachers to support elsewhere.

From tomorrow, Year 11 students will have the option of attending timetabled lessons with a subject teacher, using the quiet study space or working from home.

Most importantly, we are able to continue to provide a safe environment for everyone who studies and works here.

Please keep an eye on the website for any further updates

Best wishes

Tim Peacock

Headteacher