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Dear families,

I write with our usual weekly update of information and events from school. The first week of February is full of topical events and so in this letter I hope to give you a flavour of items that are being covered in the tutorial and PSHE curriculum in particular. There are resources, websites and ideas to help you follow these up with students at home.

Gender equality assemblies

The theme of this week's assemblies was gender equality, introducing the theme of 2021 International Women's Day: 'Choose to Challenge'. We mark International Women's Day at William Ellis for several reasons. Firstly, we have female pupils in the 6th form and female staff who are members of our school community, and therefore we recognise its importance together. Secondly, we are aware that young boys growing up modern society are exposed to conflicting ideas about women and gender stereotypes, and International Women's Day is an opportunity for them to discuss those ideas and how they can challenge ideas they do not agree with. Thirdly, we know that gender stereotypes – particularly fixed ideas about how boys should feel or behave – make it harder for teenagers to grow and reach their full potential.

The message of International Women's Day fits in with our school pledge, "More In Common" to promote equality of all kinds:

"A challenged world is an alert world.

Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions – all day, every day.

We can choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. We can choose to seek out and celebrate others' achievements.

Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world.

From challenge comes change, so let's all Choose to Challenge."

If families would like to continue discussing these topics at home, these videos would be a good way to start this conversation. We suggest that parents and carers watch the videos first to prepare to discuss the ideas with the family.

- For Year 7-10 students: [Why gender equality is important](#)
- For Year 11-13 students: [Tony Porter: A Call To Men](#)

Children's Mental Health Week

1st – 7th February is Children's Mental Health Week, and year 8 students in particular discussed this in their assemblies. We know that mental well-being of young people is being widely discussed in the media while most students are learning from home, with less face to face interaction, more time using a screen and with their own worries about their education, coronavirus and the challenges that lie ahead. Other experts balance that against the increased independence that young people have in their learning, and the way that they have been able to have more control over their studies, pursue their own interests and spend more time with their family. For every young person it will be different, and the focus for this year is on the importance of young people expressing themselves when they are feeling a range of emotions. The charity Place2Be have a range of resources to support carers and parents around children's mental health on their website:

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/parents-and-carers/> There is also a helpful leaflet attached to this letter.

Attendance checks for online lessons

The key update on remote learning this week is that we are now following up routinely on student attendance to each lesson to ensure that every student is accessing lessons. Parents and carers of students who are not attending online lessons will receive texts or emails to inform them that lessons have not been attended, just as they would have done if students had not attended a lesson when in school. Thank you to those parents and carers this week who have helped us to iron out a few initial problems with the system so that we can ensure that the information is accurate. For students with very low attendance, it helps us to identify families to target for regular phone calls to support students with good routines and identify any problems with access to technology.

While we continue to offer a full timetable of online lessons, we have had some teacher absence this week due to illness which means that students have been set assignments for some lessons or taught alongside another class in the same year group. On **Wednesday afternoon, 10th February, lessons will finish at lunchtime** so that teachers are able to plan for continued remote learning for the two weeks after half term. Some departments have sent out copies of booklets to support students in online lessons. For more ideas about remote learning, please see the 15th January “News Update” and [our remote learning information section of our website](#)

Half term holiday - Monday 15th – Friday 19th February

Contact tracing if a student tests positive for coronavirus now and during half term (for students attending on site provision only)

This is a reminder to parents that if a student has been into school and develops symptoms of coronavirus or has a positive test result less than 48 hours after being in school, families should tell the school immediately so that we can tell anyone who has been in contact with them to isolate for 10 days. They should email info@williamellis.camden.sch.uk with “positive coronavirus test” in the subject heading. This will continue over the half term holiday. There is no on-site provision over the half term holiday – this decision has been made by the Department for Education.

Attached to this letter is the weekly coronavirus update from Camden Council, with specific information about the vaccination programme.

Yours faithfully



Izzy Jones
Headteacher