



13th January 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Sadly I am writing to you once again in the context of an extended period of school closure. It is almost a year since the coronavirus pandemic began to affect educational provision in the UK and, while it is clear that there is a way forward now that vaccines are being rolled out, it will be some time before this will allow the restrictions that we are currently living under to be relaxed. The current school closure period will last until the February holiday, however I am hopeful that we will be able to allow some or all students back at school next term.

We have implemented our remote learning arrangements and also established in-school provision for vulnerable and critical worker children. I am writing to you to remind you of these arrangements and to signpost you to the supporting guidance for remote education, as well as to update you on a number of other developments.

Home Learning

The home learning timetable will follow the school timetable for all year groups, lessons will be 45 minutes in length and break and lunch times have been adjusted. Lessons are shorter to allow staff to set up their next lesson, this invariably takes longer to do than in-school lessons, also to provide students with breaks from screen time at regular intervals during the day. This will also allow some time for students to consolidate and organise their learning between lessons. I would also suggest that your child does not move to another screen activity between lessons and in breaks.

These arrangements are explained in more detail in the September remote learning update in the parents' area of the school website. We are not able to change the structure of the school day to align Key Stage 3 and Key stage 4/5 lesson timings, as this would require a complete rewrite of the school timetable.

Our expectations with regards to behaviour remain as high as they would be in school and disruptive behaviour during live lessons will be reported to parents. If a student is persistently interrupting the learning of others then they will be removed from the lesson by the class teacher and may be excluded from lessons for a period of time. If this is the case then they will be set work for that subject to complete in lieu of participating in the lesson.

Homework

Whilst we appreciate that students (and parents in some cases) are doing home learning all day, it is important that students, especially those working towards external qualifications, continue to maintain good study habits. We have, therefore, adapted our homework policy to make it manageable for students and families.

- Students in Key Stage 3 will be able to access a Sharepoint site with extended learning tasks for each subject. This will be available from Monday 18th January. Students can select pieces of work they would like to complete and submit these to their teacher when they have done so. In Year 9, we would encourage students to focus on subjects which they may be considering as GCSE option choices, alongside the core subjects.
- Students in Key Stage 4 will be set consolidation work by their class teacher. These tasks are designed to give students the opportunity to practise skills and revise core knowledge from their lessons at a time when there is less opportunity to do this in lesson time. Teachers will indicate when and how this work should be submitted to them.
- Students in the Sixth Form will continue to be set independent study tasks as usual.

Feedback

Students will be asked by their teachers to submit some pieces of work that they complete in their live lessons. This will not be every piece of work and frequency will vary from subject to subject. Teachers will explain to students how to submit the work – this might be via Show My Homework (SatchelOne), Teams, or through an external site such as Google Forms. Teachers will mark these pieces of work and provide feedback to the students. Please be aware that only these specific pieces of work, which have been designed to assess progress, will be marked - this mirrors our Feedback Policy when students are physically in school. In addition to this, students will receive feedback on homework tasks submitted to their teachers.

Students will continue to be awarded House Points by their teachers and we will keep a record of these so that students can spend these on their return to school. Parents will be informed when these have been awarded.

Managing emotions

We have been offered the opportunity to give parents free access to a course being run by JKW Coaching on managing emotions and supporting children during lockdown. If you would like to access this course, which takes place at 8pm on Monday 25th January, please register via this website: <https://www.jkwcoaching.com/understanding-your-childs-emotions>. If your son or daughter is struggling with their mental health do get in touch with their head of year and we will signpost you to additional support.

I am very aware that a five lesson remote learning day can be very demanding for some students and that the demands of remote learning are quite different from in-school learning. Evidence from the previous period of school closure and home learning experienced by children since September, suggests that children find it harder to remain on task when remote learning. The pace of live lessons in particular can be challenging as there are fewer natural breaks caused by teacher intervention. We are aware that circumstances are different for all families and children and that whilst some might be thriving, there will be others for whom remote learning is really very challenging. We have made every effort in adapting our homework policy to ensure that it is manageable whilst still providing opportunities for students to consolidate and extend their learning. If your child is struggling with remote learning, please do contact us so that we can support them, and you, with this.

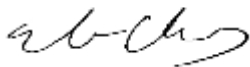
Lateral Flow Tests

We were ready to implement mass testing during the first two weeks of term as explained in the letter sent to you before the start of term. We have used the testing facility that we set up in the sports hall to test all staff who have requested a test and also the students who are in school. We will continue to test staff and students on a weekly basis for the remainder of this term, having moved the testing centre to a classroom. We have carried out c400 tests to date with no positive results. The rationale for the testing in school is to identify any asymptomatic cases amongst staff and students and while we recognise that the lateral flow test will not identify all cases, they are a useful additional measure to keep the school safe. It should be made clear, however, that a negative result does not mean that a person does not have COVID-19 and if your child is tested in school and has a negative result they must continue to follow all of the other COVID-secure measures that are in place in and out of school. If your child has any corona virus symptoms or if anyone in their household does, they must remain home from school as our testing facility is for asymptomatic testing, not for those with symptoms.

Clearly school will, once again, be a very different experience for us all over the next few weeks. I am confident that the quality of provision will be as good as it can be given the circumstances and I know that all of the staff at the school are determined to minimise the impact of school closure on learning and student well-being. I would encourage you to think of school as being open as normal with regards to contacting teachers, pastoral and support staff. I know that many parents did not do so during the previous period of closure in recognition of the limits on the school's capacity to respond and support. However we do, now, feel that we are able to provide a similar level of support as would be the case if the school was fully open, therefore I would encourage you to contact the school on learning or pastoral matters over the remainder of this term.

Best wishes and stay safe.

Yours faithfully



Mr S Mackay
Headteacher