



7 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

We realise that you are as dismayed as we are that we find ourselves in another national lockdown after we had all worked so hard to re-engage our young people with learning and get back to some kind of normal, in spite of the disruptions last term.

We know you will be wondering about how we plan to provide for the children of critical workers and vulnerable learners in school whilst offering the required remote learning to students at home.

In school

There will be small socially distanced classes, supported by staff, working through the on line provision. Children will stay in zones, wear masks at all times and will be required to be 2m away from others whenever possible. Lunch service and school transport are running as usual. Students need to bring in headphones to use with our PCs.

The vast majority of these pupils have had Lateral Flow Device tests this week, as have all the staff, so we can be reasonably confident that transmission risk in school is very low indeed.

When we have completed our mass testing programme of everyone who is coming onto the school site, we move to weekly testing of all staff and offering 7 day serial testing of close contacts with positive COVID cases as an alternative to self-isolation.

At home

We need all pupils to be up, fed and dressed and ready to access their online learning by 9.00am. Form Tutors will be arranging some form time sessions each week to check in on pupils and make sure everyone is settled in to a good pattern of study and self-care. All pupils should now be used to working on Teams to access their remote learning. Please let us know if your child is unwell or if there is a problem with digital access that is preventing them from logging onto Teams every morning to start the day.

There will then be a “mixed bag” of remote learning experiences, including some live lessons, some pre-recorded lessons, some audio ppts, some traditional set work, web resources like GCSE pod and tasks to do away from the screen, depending on the individual student’s curriculum. We continue to provide you with Weekly Outlines on our website so that you can have an idea of what is being set in the different subjects.

The expectation is that pupils will stick to their usual school timetable slots and work for a minimum of 4 hours a day, although it is important to stress that this can only ever be an average: some students complete work quickly, others take longer.

Each subject will ensure that there is assessment and feedback in one form or another at least once a week. This could be whole class feedback, interactive quizzes marked automatically, GCSE pod assessments or extended work that is responded to individually.

Teachers will let their Heads of Department and your child's Year Head know if there is a "no show " for registrations and live lessons and if there is no evidence of engagement with the work set. We will contact you to see if you need any additional support or to discuss whether your child needs to be in school.

If your child is not sure about something within a subject then they should use the Teams chat to ask their teacher about it, who will get back to them as soon as they are free to do so.

Exams

As our students discovered last year, when exams are cancelled and teacher assessments are used, candidates can only do well if they keep working hard and doing their best most of the time. We use all the evidence we have to make judgements about grades and that includes all the ongoing work that we see from our students during the course. It is therefore as important as ever that students consistently make their best efforts. We will let you know if we have concerns sooner rather than later. Year 9 and Year 13 exams on the calendar are cancelled and that assessments will now take place through online learning.

Pastoral support

In spite of the way this is being reported in the press, school is not closed. We are all working every day and there will always be someone to respond to queries or offer support if you get in touch with us. That will be very much what you are used to. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have concerns or need help and advice.

Remember that our website has a lot of material to help you work out how to use Teams etc if your child is feeling a bit rusty. It's probably a good idea to have a good look around the website just to see how much support material is there for you now.

We'll keep in touch with regular updates but we really hope we'll be sending one to say we are welcoming everybody back in before too long. In the meantime, take care, stay safe and good luck!

Best wishes

QES