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5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

We write to confirm arrangements for our remote learning provision which, following the government announcement yesterday evening, will now be in place for all students in all year groups from 8.30am on Wednesday 6 January 2021 until February half term, at the earliest, a much longer period of time than had originally been signposted to us.

We know that this period of lockdown will generate a great deal of anxiety among our students and families, but we have learned a great deal about the delivery of remote learning and pastoral support from last year and believe we are well placed to provide the best possible experience that we can despite the obvious constraints. We do not underestimate the impact of having another extended period away from school could have academically, socially and on the wellbeing of every one of our students, and we are committed to mitigating the adverse effects of their absence from school as much as is possible.

Departments and year teams have worked hard over the Christmas holiday and at the start of this term to plan interactive, engaging and challenging learning activities to deliver remotely. All tutor times and lessons will be run via Google Meet with resources uploaded to Google Classroom. This means that there will be a live element to every lesson and the teacher in each lesson will be 'present' via Google Meet for the entirety of that lesson to take questions and to clarify areas of misunderstanding. Students will also have periods during each lesson where they will be asked to work independently on an activity or to watch a pre-recorded explanation or video resource.

We have created a detailed guide for students to explain how remote learning will work going forward which we attach to this letter.

**In summary our expectations of all our students are:**

- they should log into Google Classroom to access the link to the Google Meet for tutor time at 8.30 each morning;
- they should then follow their timetable, an updated copy of which was sent home yesterday, throughout the rest of the day. We start on Wednesday - Week 2;
- students should click on the link at the scheduled start of each lesson and be ready to learn;
- teachers will welcome students to the start of each lesson, and a register will be taken. Where students are able to respond verbally, they should do so. Teachers will also summarise and conclude each lesson;
- students will be expected to behave appropriately at all times, and where behaviour becomes an issue this will be dealt with quickly. As a last resort, as in school, a student may be asked to leave the Google Meet lesson, if they are persistently disrupting the learning of others;

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- students will be asked to have their microphones off, unless they are answering or asking a question. There is not an expectation that they will have their cameras on unless they feel comfortable to do so;
- we expect all students to engage fully in every activity and to use the chat function, or to indicate with a 'hand up' if they want to ask a question of their teacher to help them make progress during the lesson; and
- teachers may ask students to submit their work via Google Classroom.

### Homework

- This will be set entirely based on the progress made in each lesson, and to support successful engagement with the next lesson. Separate tasks will not be set at this stage. Exam groups will be given clear guidance and support with additional revision activities as appropriate.

### Attendance

- Attendance at remote tutor time and lessons is compulsory. If your child is too unwell to attend lessons on any given day, **please contact the attendance line before 8.00am** to explain why your child will be absent on that day.
- We will follow our usual procedures in following up on students who do not attend registration and lessons without explanation.

### Staff absence

- If a teacher is too unwell to deliver their lessons, there will be no cover for the live delivery and instead staff will upload resources and activities for students to work through on Google Classroom.

### Exams

You will be aware that the government has announced that A Level and GCSE exams will not take place this year, as had been planned. We know that this will have caused a great deal of anxiety and concern for Year 11 and Year 13 students and parents/carers, and as soon as we have any information about what will replace them, we will of course communicate that to you. It is, therefore, important that students in Years 11 and 13 continue to engage in all lessons and with all the work and assessments set until we know more.

- Health and Social and Applied Science examinations will take place as planned; and
- students have been invited to attend face to face revision sessions by their teachers to support their preparation for these exams and this will continue this week.

### Year 12 internal assessments

- Year 12 assessments in the week of 18 January 2021 will go ahead as planned, but with students working on these from home; Mr Phillips will be in touch about the logistics of these shortly.

### Critical worker provision

- At present, because of the need to minimise the number of staff and students in school to reduce contact between households and because of the demands of delivering live lessons remotely, we are not able to accept any more students to our critical worker provision.

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## New staff

We have issued new timetables to every student as there are a number of changes to staffing at the start of this term.

We welcome Mr Carter to the Maths team and Mrs Burge as Head of Geography. We are delighted to be joined in our SEND department by Miss Morse and Miss Hammond. There have also been a number of tutor changes namely: Mrs Burge is now taking 9CY, Mr Benjamin has joined Miss Nasir in taking 8EX, Mr Carter will be joining Mr Reid in taking 13B and Mrs White is joining Mrs Saber in taking 13E.

## COVID-19 testing in schools

You will be aware that we have been working towards setting up a programme of asymptomatic testing which was due to start at the time of the Year 11 and Year 13 students returning to school on the original date of 11 January. In another change to the government position on this, schools are now expected to deliver this, rather than it being an option for schools to consider. We have had some communication from parents/carers concerned about the accuracy, logistical issues and potential false confidence that the lateral testing programme might engender. We understand all your concerns and, whilst it is incumbent upon us to deliver the programme, it is not mandatory for any child to be tested. We will send out further information about the testing programme as and when it becomes clearer about when children will be back in school.

## Communication with school

Reception will be staffed throughout this period; however, we cannot guarantee that you will be able to speak directly to a member of staff given the nature of their teaching commitments and their location of work. If you have any concerns, or questions about work in a particular subject, please contact the subject teacher in the first instance. If you have any welfare or wellbeing concerns, please contact your child's tutor and/or Head of Year. Whilst we are closed in terms of students being present in our buildings, we are very much open in terms of delivery of teaching and learning and we remained committed to providing the best possible pastoral care in this situation that we can.

We believe that the best place for students to be is in school, but whilst a national lockdown is in place, we will do our utmost to provide the most positive experience of learning that we can. We know that juggling the children's schooling, your work commitments and your family responsibilities is very challenging, and we would ask you to remember that our teachers are having to do that as well. Your continued patience, empathy and support, as we move through this next period of lockdown is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



David Lach  
Head of School



Ros Allen  
Executive Headteacher

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