

25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

We are pleased to report that over the last few days, engagement in online learning has reached record levels, with around 86% of students attending. This is a significant improvement on the levels of engagement we first recorded when we launched our online learning and also considerably better than our on-site attendance in October and November, prior to closure. Please can we thank you all for your continued efforts in getting your children online and monitoring their work.

We have received some wonderful feedback from many of you about the quality of the online learning offer. We have shared this with staff, particularly where you have mentioned them by name. Such positivity has a huge impact on morale and is always gratefully received. At the same time, if there are things that we can improve we will always consider constructive feedback and make changes where we feel appropriate.

The basis of our online learning is that we offer students their normal timetabled classes but via Microsoft Teams rather than on-site. This means a morning registration and the normal five one-hour sessions that our young people would have received were they on site. This has worked well although some staff and students have encountered issues logging out of one lesson and into their next lesson with sufficient time so that they arrive on time and are fully prepared.

We will, therefore, be giving staff the flexibility to begin to draw their lessons to a close at the 50-minute mark (rather than teaching for the full hour). This will then provide the time needed for everyone to get ready for their next session. It will also give an opportunity for individuals to take a short break for their personal comfort. We strongly advise that students stay off their screens at lunchtime and at the end of the day take the opportunity to get out in the fresh air for their daily exercise, hopefully utilising the expert advice offered by our PE staff in their weekly bulletins.

Teachers are marking and assessing work that has been completed by students, although additional homework is normally not being expected. This does mean that for our students, since lessons are finished at 3.20pm (2.30pm on Thursday), the rest of the day is totally their own to get outside and rest their eyes and brains. I am sure you have been as impressed, as I have, by the amount of work your child has been producing. It has been a joy to see your photographs over the last week so keep them coming in.

Each term, students will have their progress formally reviewed with a standardised assessment in all subjects. Please be aware that in line with our marking expectations, this is the only piece that must be formally assessed in this way and will always be accompanied by detailed and developmental feedback. Daily work will always be monitored and checked. There will also be regular feedback and plenty of high-quality assessment for learning in the lessons.

Teachers will request the submission of some classwork either by email or by uploading it to Teams, which will also provide the opportunity for plenty of rewards to be given for effort, application and progress.

Our teachers will try to offer students the alternative option, where practical, of completing work on paper (a photo can then be uploaded) to help those who find it challenging to work on a screen for extended periods of time.

We do hope that soon we will be able to welcome all of our students back into school – it is a strange place without them and we miss having them here!

Please continue to look after one another.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr R Speller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr R Speller  
Headteacher