



Dear Parents/Carers,

When I wrote to you last Friday we had already heard the Prime Minister's announcement and what we now know is that:

- Children will not return to school straight after February half-term. The earliest date for return is Monday 8 March
- The next review to consider whether schools can return will be on Monday 22 February. Education settings, as well as students, parents and carers will be given at least two weeks notice to prepare for a return to face-to-face education.

Schools and colleges will remain open to children of critical workers and vulnerable students after February half-term, as they are now. All other students will continue to receive high quality remote education at home. This is in line with the wider national lockdown measures to help minimise the spread of the virus and respond quickly to the new variant.

Therefore, the outcomes of the Monday 22 February review will determine if students will return on Monday 8 March. This gives us certainty that we will be teaching remotely for the first two weeks after half-term, but it also highlights a need for us to scenario plan for a continuation of remote learning for a little longer. Part of this planning process was to ask you for your feedback on the remote learning experience so far, so that we can reflect upon what you have told us in our approach going forward, particularly if remote learning continues to be the vehicle for delivery of your child's education for many more weeks.

We were extremely grateful that over 500 parents/carers responded to this survey and were delighted with the overwhelming positive comments, thank you for your input into this. As part of our commitment to the delivery of quality remote learning, Mrs Bennett (Assistant Principal) has been given the overarching responsibility for its quality and delivery, including that the provision meets expectations for remote education. Please find our **Remote Education - Information to Parents/Carers** guide [here](#). However, if your child has a subject specific or learning related issue, they should continue to communicate with their class teacher or tutor in the first instance. If we have picked up that your child is struggling to engage with remote learning, we will be contacting you imminently.

In the first instance, we have made the decision that we will be expanding our online live Teams offer for students in Years 7 to 9. This decision has not been made lightly as we know this will have an impact on staff well-being, particularly those who have childcare responsibilities. However, we do feel that it is the appropriate next step in supporting your child, whilst still maintaining a balance for staff.

Therefore, from Monday 8 February;

- We will be asking all subjects in Year 9 to offer a live Teams lesson once per week. Currently a number of students are accessing a live session for some option subjects. This will now increase to all Core and Option subjects
- Years 7 & 8 will be offered, in the first instance, a live lesson for each core subject once per week.

Please be aware, that when designing this increase to live remote provision, we have tried to take into account how many live lessons your child will receive per day. Ideally, we would like these sessions spread across the week but staff restrictions may mean this is not always possible.

We expect that next week (from Monday 8 February) will be more of an orientation week, where staff will be meeting and greeting your children, who have limited experience of live lessons. However, they will also be discussing their fantastic remote work up to now, going through any misconceptions and explaining to them the expectations of a live lesson.

As you can imagine, teachers are receiving continuous professional development in relation to best practice in live teaching, and as a result are working tirelessly to ensure that your child's live teaching experience mimics as closely as possible, that of a real classroom.

In lessons students will be required to collaborate through a variety of forms including:

- Being asked to switch cameras on
- Being asked to respond to questions via the mic/speaker function
- Being asked to like comments as an indicator they are focused and ready to learn
- Being asked to submit responses via the chat function
- Breakout rooms to support students to apply their learning.

As above, please continue to encourage your child to participate in the lesson as much as the remote home learning environment allows. We are all missing seeing our students, and so, if students can ensure they have cameras on and are actively participating in lessons, this will allow for a much more engaging lesson for all involved. Teachers will be asking students to answer and ask questions via their microphones so that students can be supported to expand and build on their ideas and responses, just as they would in the normal classroom. Furthermore, some teachers may choose to use online breakout rooms to allow students to collaborate in small groups and apply their learning.

As a reminder to all students who are receiving live Teams lessons:

- Students should be prompt to all lessons as registers will be taken
- Students should ensure that they have the correct equipment and resources for the day
- Students should not leave the lesson at any point and expectations around students leaving lessons remain the same as in school
- If students require a toilet break, then they should wait until one of the frequent break times
- Please kindly remind your child that eating during lessons is not permitted and students should save this for their break and lunch where there is ample time to refuel in preparation for the next lesson.

It is expected that behaviour in lessons is as it should be when in school. Your child is entitled to disruption free learning and teachers are instructed and supported to sanction students as they would if in the normal classroom. Please be aware that if students do not follow teacher instructions and disrupt their own learning, and the learning of others, the following will happen:

- The student will receive a verbal warning from the teacher
- If the student then disrupts the lesson for a second time the teacher will inform the student that they will be removed from the lesson and will then proceed to do so
- The teacher will contact you by the end of the Academy day to inform you that your child was removed from the lesson and the reason why.

In these challenging times, we also recognise that our students will react differently to the pressures of working remotely and to the wider experience of national restrictions and living through a period of lockdown. If you are looking for ways in which you can support your child at home, we recommend the following resources:

- **Resources for Mental Health and Well-Being** - a selection of resources and interactive websites collated by Dorset Council: <https://mailchi.mp/dorsetcouncil/adumks27ey>
- **The Parents' Guide to Studying for GCSEs in 2020/21 and The Parents' Guide to Studying for A-Levels in 2020/21** – excellent booklets written specifically to support parents with students in KS4 and KS5: Click [here](#) to download the guides.

We realise that the current situation is not ideal. However, it is helpful to have a provisional timeframe in place. Please can I urge you to ensure that your child engages fully with their remote education at this point in time. I understand that this is a challenging experience for many of us, but I am convinced that working together is the best way to support students. If you need any support regarding your child's education, please contact us at the earliest opportunity.

And finally, I would like to take the opportunity to once again congratulate your children for keeping up their efforts with their remote learning. They are doing so very well in the most difficult set of circumstances and we are very proud of them. Can I also thank you for all that you and your family are doing in this regard and for your continued support in keeping learning and well-being at the heart of what we do.

Kind regards

Mr M Avoth
Principal