

Our Ref: SST/HBr

Wednesday 27th January 2021

Dear Parents / Guardians,

January Update

I do hope you are all keeping well and staying safe.

I wanted to update you on a number of matters regarding the school, remote learning and exams as follows:

Remote Learning

We are now into our fourth week of remote learning as a school. I have been highly impressed by the levels of participation and engagement with the remote learning that we have set as a school. I would like to remind parents, guardians and pupils that all work is set via Microsoft Teams. Pupils should continue to follow their normal daily timetable. With this in mind, pupils should log onto Teams for 08.45. They will receive a welcome from their tutor and watch a daily assembly. Pupils should then follow their normal daily lessons. It is also highly important that pupils take breaks at the normal break and lunch slots and come away from their screens. The remote learning day ceases at 14.45, as per the normal school day, and I highly recommend that pupils take a break and, if possible, go for a walk or do some form of exercise.

In terms of our approach to remote learning the vast majority of our lessons are pre-recorded, with subject teachers available via the Microsoft Teams platform to field questions and concerns. Some staff have elected to deliver live lessons but this is not an institutional expectation.

Please do note that some subjects are also setting homework still, with a view to replicating the normal school experience as best we can.

If your household has a device/internet access issue then please do contact the school and we will endeavour to support you as best we can.

I would like to thank you as parents/guardians for your support with remote learning. All of us will no doubt agree that the very best place for your children to learn is invariably in school. However, the current climate precludes this. Remote learning is challenging and I thank you for doing your absolute best to support your son/daughter. I also thank you for your support for the school and for recognising just how hard the staff are working to

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ensure your son/daughter continues to receive an education. Some of the messages of support to the school have been truly humbling.

Half Term

As a school we will be closing for the half term break and all remote learning over this period will be suspended. I think it is important that everyone has the opportunity to stop, pause and rest over this period. I am also sure that a break from laptop/device screens will be welcomed. As a reminder, half term is scheduled to commence as of Saturday 13th February and the school will open again for keyworker/vulnerable pupils and recommence remote learning on Monday 22nd February.

Can I please ask that if your son/daughter does test positive for Covid-19 over the course of the February Half Term break that you continue to contact the school via office@thedustonschool.org. We still need to be aware of positive cases as a school and we may need to notify pupils who have been accessing the keyworker provision that they need to self-isolate.

Exams

Sadly at this current point in time the school knows as much as you do about exams, or what will replace GCSE/A Level exams, this summer. A consultation document was issued by Ofqual and this consultation comes to a close this week. I am hopeful that a clear set of communications will be forthcoming sooner rather than later and that I can give absolute clarity to all pupils in Years 11/12/13 as to what is expected of them. For the here and now I do ask that all pupils in these key examination year groups continue to engage with the remote learning that we are setting and not to lose heart. I know that for some pupils this is easier said than done. If any pupil needs to speak to staff at the school about this then you are more than welcome to do so. I fully acknowledge that it is upsetting for our pupils, and yourselves as parents/guardians, that we still do not know what the examination format looks like this summer. It is equally as frustrating for the staff who dearly want to help and support our pupils.

Should there be any further developments over the next few weeks regarding the school and, indeed, how schools are set to return then I will write again to you.

Take good care and stay safe.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Strickland
Principal

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